

# Social Scientist

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☐ Vietnam : Prelude to Peace or Interlude in War?  
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# Social Scientist

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*Articles, notes, discussion, communication, and review express the views of their  
authors and not necessarily of the editors or of the Indian School of Social Sciences.*

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### FROM THE EDITOR

Although the Paris agreement of January 27, 1973, is an event of historical significance marking the victory of the Vietnamese people over US imperialism, peace has not returned to Indochina yet, for the unforgivable American assault on the land and people of Asia continues unabated in the villages and towns of Cambodia and Laos. North Vietnam also has denounced the "very serious and systematic violation of the Paris agreement by the government of the United States and the Saigon administration". In his article "Vietnam: Prelude to Peace or Interlude in War", R L Walli gives the historical, political and economic reasons behind America's involvement in Vietnam. His story of US policy exposes the coldness of mind and the meanness of spirit reflected in the *Pentagon Papers* and more recently in Nixon's fourth annual 'State of the World' Report to Congress.

In the final instalment of P Sundarayya's series on Telangana we reach the crucial stage of the struggle with the big question looming over it on whether to call off the armed resistance after the intervention of the Indian Army or to continue it partially in defence of the peasants' land and democratic rights and for the safety of the cadre. The agony of it was heightened against the background of differences of opinion at the national and regional levels. In these last phases a Marxist-Leninist understanding of the partisan struggle emerged out of the experience of the fighters themselves and from the advice of fraternal parties and of J V Stalin, in particular. Problems of organisation, of ideological development, advance and defence of the struggle, all these are discussed frankly in a spirit of self-criticism. These lessons, crystallised in the crucible of Indian revolutionary experience, are never to be forgotten.

R L WALLI

## *Vietnam*

### *Prelude to Peace or Interlude in War?*

THE Vietnam cease-fire agreement has now been coupled with the final declaration by the International Conference on Vietnam. Public opinion the world over is relieved because the most powerful military machine in history has stopped raining death and destruction on a people in an attempt to deny them the right to shape their own destiny. But, will this present precarious cease-fire be a prelude to an enduring peace, or merely an interlude in a war that has continuously been forced on the Vietnamese people for the last three decades? This vital question should not be lost sight of amidst the renewed intellectual claptrap about a 'New Balance of Power', 'New Structure of Peace', and the like, which incidentally reminds one of the ignominious role played in the Vietnam crisis by the academic mafia, including the liberals who, having supported the war in the beginning, turned 'dovish' at a later stage more on pragmatic grounds than out of any disagreement with the basic premises underlying the US intervention in Vietnam.

The Vietnamese, who have been betrayed twice in the past over the 1946 and 1954 agreements, are understandably wary of the intentions of Washington and its puppet Saigon government regarding the present agreement on Vietnam.

It would be hazardous to overlook the basis of the Vietnam problem in the expectation that Kissinger's grandiose plan of imposing a new structure of peace, contrived and dominated by the big powers, will realise what the US has failed to achieve on the battlefield. One historic lesson of Vietnam has been the futility of any such attempt. Such an attitude will merely lead to the reenactment of the past tragic events. The fragile peace in Vietnam will continue to dangle over its graves so long as the fundamental question, namely, political settlement, is left unresolved.

# I

The Vietnamese have been denied peace for generations : they fought the French colonialists for more than eighty years, the Japanese during the Second World War, then the US-aided French during the first Indochina war and presently the United States in the second Indochina war. No people have ever suffered such an appalling destruction of life and property in their struggle against foreign aggression. The epoch-making heroic resistance of the Vietnamese people against the US war of extermination has involved a staggering magnitude of death and destruction. Of the 45 million people of Indochina, one in every 35 has been killed, one in 15 wounded, and one in six rendered a refugee. The United States dropped 6.3 million tons of bombs over Indochina during 1965-71, of which 3.9 million tons were showered on the southern zone of Vietnam (American way of 'defending' a country by destroying it!) and 60,000 tons on the northern zone. Latest in the series, the December 1972 carpet bombing by B-52 aircraft has considerably increased the tonnage for North Vietnam. Conservative estimates put it at over 7 million tons, that is, more than thrice the total tonnage dropped during the Second World War. The energy equivalent of this tonnage would be several hundred Hiroshima-type atom bombs. This is in addition to the 7 million tons of ground ordnance spent over the entire Indochinese peninsula. The quarter million 'dud' bombs, littered all over the land are liable to explode in future if knocked over forcefully, during ploughing, for example. Indochina is dotted with 26 million bomb craters (South Vietnam alone has 21 million), each averaging 9 metres in diameter and 4.5 metres in depth. The chemical warfare from 1961 to 1965 under the 'anti-crop' and 'defoliation' campaigns had destroyed 10 per cent of land in South Vietnam, more than half the arable land.<sup>1</sup> South Vietnam has lost sizable part of its rich forests. Experts view the long-term effects of these destructive undertakings with alarm.

Only 5 to 8 per cent of the bombing missions in Indochina were against military targets. The rest were used indiscriminately ('Free Fire Zones', 'Interdiction Raids' and so on), for killing and wounding human beings, and for destroying homes, hospitals, schools, crops and livestock. Employing all weapons in its non-nuclear arsenal, the United States treated the Vietnamese as guinea-pigs for testing the effect of new wea-

pons. The US genocidal war in Vietnam has involved the unabashed violation of the three International Conventions : Hague of 1907; Geneva Conventions of 1929 and 1949. Vietnamese men, women and children have been "burned alive by napalm, riddled by anti-personnel bombs, buried alive by high explosives and cut to pieces by fragmentation bombs" <sup>2</sup> at the altar of America's 'manifest destiny'. Like carpet bombing, automated warfare causes more civilian casualties because it cannot distinguish between a military and non-military object, a combatant and non-combatant. Central Intelligence Agency's 'Phoenix Operation' involving the liquidation of thousands of 'politically unsound' Vietnamese, the US-financed 'Tiger Cage' prisons where prisoners languish to death under ghastly conditions, interrogation by tossing prisoners down to death from high-flying helicopters and by chopping off parts of the prisoner's body, eating the liver of a killed adversary by the South Korean mercenaries of the US marauders—all these constitute the unenviable contribution of American capitalism to the march of dark forces in the assault on human dignity.

The cold statistics about the US butchery, chilling as they are, do not portray the actual dimensions of the devastation wrought on a poor peasant society. The United States has shattered the Vietnamese social fabric. The dumping of millions of South Vietnamese into concentration camps under the Staley-Taylor Plan was done at bayonet points, by burning peasants' huts and crops, and by indiscriminate bombardment ('Free Fire Zones') of their villages. The brutality involved in the eviction of 5 million South Vietnamese from their villages—into the urban life of pavements and shanties, unemployment and beggary, prostitution and thievery—cannot be whitewashed by intellectual rationalisations like 'Resources control', 'Nation-building experiment', 'Landscape management' or 'Forced urbanisation'. The United States stands indicted by the same standards that were established at the Nuremberg trial for war crimes. Long after the indomitable Vietnamese repair the ravages of US imperialism, the maimed men, women and children will continue to be eloquent monuments to the US genocide that must have sent Hitler to shame in his grave. Indochina has unmasked the monstrous character of imperialism. Vietnam will remain a by-name for the unimaginable barbarism and savagery perpetrated on a peasant society by the technologically most advanced and the most powerful centre of imperialism in the world.

Vietnam is, above all, a testimony to the invincibility of a people galvanised into a revolutionary struggle. The Paris cease-fire agreement and the final declaration, the uncertainty about their final outcome notwithstanding, are unquestionably a victory for the Vietnamese people. The pernicious theory of Vietnam permanently divided into two states, so sedulously built over the years by the US and its proteges abroad, has been given a coup de grace by the reaffirmation of the unity of Vietnam and the temporary character of the demarcation line between North and

South Vietnam. All foreign troops, that is, the US occupation forces have to withdraw within 60 days. The Provisional Revolutionary Government has been recognised as an undeniable political force in the South, and the 'leopard spot' cease-fire recognises PRG's administration of the areas under its control till the main political groups in South Vietnam work out the final political settlement. The United States has also agreed to leave the South Vietnamese free to decide their political future, the previous US denial of which led to the war. The full significance of the United States having given in on these crucial points can be fathomed only against the backdrop of the important developments in Vietnam during the last three decades.

## II

After the fall of France, during the Second World War, Japan occupied Vietnam with the collaboration of the Vichy regime. Ho Chi Minh, who had organised resistance against the Japanese since the beginning of the thirties, formed the Vietminh (Patriotic League for the Independence of Vietnam) in 1941 to fight Japan and France till independence was won. So effective was the Vietminh resistance movement that the United States sought its help in rescuing downed American pilots, providing intelligence to the Allies, and for spreading propaganda among the civilian population. Towards the end of the Second World War, the Vietminh had gained control over large areas in Vietnam. After the capitulation of Japan, Ho Chi Minh made the historic declaration of independence of Vietnam. But the independence was crushed in less than a month by the British imperialists who reestablished the French colonial rule. Under the Potsdam agreement, the British were to supervise the surrender of Japanese troops to the south of the sixteenth parallel. But violating the terms of the mandate, they militarily crushed the infant republic for recolonisation by France.

Despite the persistent efforts by Ho Chi Minh to secure the independence of Vietnam from the French in a peaceful way, the latter's refusal and trickery sparked off what is now known as the first Indochina war (1946-54) which culminated in the French military defeat at Dien Bien Phu. The US played an ignoble role in this war. It gave all-out support military, economic and political to France against the forces of liberation. The then Vice-President Nixon paid tribute to France for defending the 'free world' in Indochina.<sup>3</sup> Apart from sending military advisers to assist the French, American aid which fuelled the French military campaign in Vietnam swelled from \$150 million per annum in 1950 to over \$1 billion in 1954 when it was "paying 78 per cent of French Union costs in Indochinese war".<sup>4</sup> Here, it is pertinent to recall what President Eisenhower remarked at the Governors' Conference on August 4, 1953: "If Indochina goes—the tin and the tungsten that we so greatly value from that area would cease coming. . . . So when the United States votes \$400 million to help the war, we are voting for the cheapest

way we can to prevent the occurrence of something that would be of most terrible significance to the United States of America. . . our ability to get certain things from the riches of the Indochinese territory and from Southeast Asia." Earlier, the *New York Times* of February 12, 1950 remarked: "Indochina is a prize worth a large gamble. In the North are exportable tin, tungsten, zinc, manganese, coal, lumber, rice; and in the South are rice, rubber, tea and pepper. . . ."

On the eve of the Dien Bien Phu military rout of the French, the United States was prepared to shore up the French by direct military intervention in the garb of a western coalition. It could not do so for lack of British backing without which Congress would not support such a move. At that time the United States even toyed with the idea of using nuclear weapons in Indochina.<sup>6</sup>

The opening of the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina synchronised with the defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu. The Geneva agreement provided for the peaceful resolution of the conflict. It recognised the unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam, but temporarily partitioned Vietnam into two zones along the seventeenth parallel subject to their being reunified within two years through internationally supervised elections. The Vietminh gave important concessions, adversely disproportionate to its battlefield gains, in the expectation of realising its objectives in a peaceful confrontation at the political plane. At the time of the signing of the Geneva agreement on Vietnam, the Vietminh occupied all but a few 'islands' of the territory to the north of the seventeenth parallel as well as approximately two thirds of the territory to the south of that line.<sup>9</sup> The territorial concessions of the Vietminh included Onang Ngai and Binh Dinh, a long-time coastal stronghold between the thirteenth and fourteenth parallels. The Vietminh demanded thirteenth parallel as the provisional partition line and the holding of unification elections within six months. However, it settled for the seventeenth parallel and accepted a two year delay in elections—all in expectation of a political settlement guaranteed by the Accords.

The United States had promised not to disturb the implementation of the Geneva Accords. But from the very beginning it acted in ways contrary to the 1954 agreement on Vietnam, and, in the words of the authors of the *Pentagon Papers*, came to have "a direct role in the ultimate breakdown of the Geneva settlement".<sup>7</sup> The United States pitchforked Ngo Dinh Diem and foisted him on South Vietnam. "Diem's problem", wrote David Hotham, "is that he is not a leader who has been merely helped by the West. The emperor Bao Dai appointed him, but that was only a formal act. It was Bidault and Dulles who chose him and put him in his position. The objectionable word 'puppet' so often used by both sides in the propaganda war, is in case literally true. . . ."<sup>8</sup> The United States used economic blackmail to prop up the Diem regime in South Vietnam. It made the grant of US aid conditional upon Diem's stay in power.<sup>8</sup> As Richard Falk put it succinctly, the United States

established "an American puppet regime in South Vietnam of a neo-colonial rather than colonialist variety, which means that its real character is harder to see".<sup>10</sup> On August 3, 1954, the US National Security Council held that the US goal in Vietnam was "to maintain a friendly non-Communist South Vietnam" and, contrary to the final declaration of the Geneva Conference, "to prevent a Communist victory through all-Vietnam elections".<sup>11</sup>

Given this attitude of the United States, there was hardly any chance of success for the Geneva settlement. On August 6, 1956, the South Vietnam Government declared that it would not recognise the Geneva agreements. The very existence of South Vietnam derived from these agreements. It was hardly for the Saigon Government to dispute the binding character of the instrument which gave it legal birth, and which did so at a time when total victory seemed within Vietminh's grasp. Having been its willing beneficiary, the US proteges refused to discharge their obligations. It was given to President Eisenhower to admit that the United States and its showboys in Saigon refused to carry out the election stipulation because Ho Chi Minh would have bagged '80 per cent' votes.<sup>12</sup> The non-implementation of this main clause scuttled the whole agreement. It has been aptly remarked that "the second Indochina war started on July 21, 1956", the "day deadline passed which had been set up earlier at Geneva for reunification elections to be held between the two zones of Vietnam."<sup>13</sup> The oft-proclaimed goal of 'self-determination' was in fact acceptable to the US as long as South Vietnam did not choose neutralisation and still less a Communist or a pro-Communist government. In 1964 President Johnson cabled his ambassador in Saigon, saying: "your mission is precisely for the purpose of knocking down the idea of neutralisation wherever it raises its ugly head".<sup>14</sup> The flagrant violation by the United States and its Saigon stooges of the political, military, and non-reprisal clauses of the 1954 agreement on Vietnam is now a fact of history. Reporting on its monitoring of the Geneva agreement, the International Control Commission (ICC) for Vietnam observed that "the major part of its difficulties has arisen in South Vietnam."<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the *Pentagon Papers* are a sad commentary on the all-round and continuous US violation of the 1954 agreement on Vietnam.

The military provisions of the Geneva agreement were shown scant respect by Diem and the United States. The extension of SEATO guarantee to South Vietnam, which the United States was primarily responsible for, was the starting point of disregard for the military clauses of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities which forbade adherence to military alliance by either zone. Even after the conclusion of the Geneva Conference in 1954, the United States continued the sabotage operations against North Vietnam which had been started while the conference was in session. These operations aimed at "gradual wrecking" of Hanoi's bus service and railways, modern presses, and various psy-

chological and political warfare techniques.<sup>16</sup> More US personnel were brought into Vietnam for this purpose to beat the August 11, 1954 deadline set by the Geneva settlement for freezing the number of foreign military personnel.<sup>17</sup> Arms, ammunition, and other equipment for these sabotage operations were flown in by the United States Air Force.<sup>18</sup> The covert introduction of military personnel and massive equipment by the United States in South Vietnam, in patent disregard of the Geneva agreement has been highlighted by both the *Pentagon Papers* and the International Control Commission's Reports. The Michigan State University Group (1955-59) was used as a smokescreen for distributing arms and munition in South Vietnam. Five members of the MSU Group with 'faculty ranks' were organising espionage on behalf of CIA.<sup>19</sup> Diem's "Denunciation of Communists" campaign and his massive military sweeps all over South Vietnam for arresting and killing the Vietminh members who had fought against the French rule did not square up with the non-reprisal stipulations against the Geneva agreement. He even arrested those who pleaded for a faithful implementation of the 1954 Accords and for holding the reunification elections.

Though the refusal of the Diem regime to hold the 1956 elections, being violative of the Geneva Accords, released North Vietnam from any obligation to respect the Vietnam cease-fire, Hanoi counselled patience and tapped all peaceful methods for achieving unification even at the risk of being charged with the desertion of national cause by the South Vietnamese. Diem's repudiation of the Geneva agreement and his repressive rule precipitated popular discontent which later snowballed into organised resistance.

In 1954, the United States started with a policy of 'roll back' of Communism from North Vietnam, which was listed as one of the major goals by the National Security Council in 1956.<sup>20</sup> Despite massive military and economic aid from the US, the South Vietnam ruling clique was showing signs of caving in. The American policy of 'roll back' of Communism from the North, and the development of South Vietnam into an anti-Communist bastion was not paying dividends. The teams of American and Diem agents sent to the North since 1954 as part of the 'roll back' effort achieved nothing but plain acts of sabotage. Diem's formation of the 'Committee for Liberation of North' in 1958, which parachuted saboteurs into the Northern zone<sup>21</sup> also proved to be a fiasco. Faced with the receding prospects of Saigon rulers, Kennedy, apart from rushing in more arms, authorised limited US combat participation under the cloak of advisory role. In 1960, North Vietnam after "five years of honest application of Geneva agreements, (decided) to intervene progressively in the South in order to press by force for reunification that could not be attained through other means",<sup>22</sup> first by declaring its support for the national liberation movement in the South, and later in response to increasing US intervention, by giving aid.

In a desperate attempt to ensure the survival of the sinking anti-Com-

munist fortress in South Vietnam, the United States vigorously harped on the theory of 'two Vietnams'. In 1963, the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk said : "The other side was fully committed—in the original Geneva settlement of 1954 to the arrangement which provided for South Vietnam as an independent entity. . . ." <sup>23</sup> This distortion of facts was repeated by President Johnson, who in August 1964 held that the Geneva agreement "guaranteed the independence of South Vietnam". <sup>24</sup> The Geneva agreement recognised the unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam, as had been done earlier by the March 1946 agreement between France and the Vietminh. The thesis of 'two Vietnams' does not find any sanction in the history of Vietnam either.

In 1964-65 when the collapse of the US puppets in South Vietnam was well in sight, the United States launched full-scale invasion which in addition to the use of hyper-modern military apparatus, involved the use of over half a million US troops, one million puppet South Vietnamese troops and thousands of troops from Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Thailand. The proclaimed goal of the US was to "bomb Vietnam back to Stone Age" so as to force North Vietnam and the liberation force in the South to accept the permanent division of Vietnam with South Vietnam under a US-manipulated regime.

Drugged with the 'arrogance of power', the United States turned down all offers for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Finally, however, the heroic Vietnamese people humbled the US military Juggernaut and forced it to settle down for peace. Now the United States has repudiated its earlier policy of 'roll back' of Communism from the North, denial of self-determination to the South Vietnamese and permanent division of Vietnam with South Vietnam dominated by the US. It has agreed to withdraw from South Vietnam, recognised the unity of North and South Vietnam, agreed to let the South Vietnamese decide their own political future. It is in the light of these achievements that the recent agreement on Vietnam, inspite of the uncertainty about its final outcome, is an unmistakable victory for the Vietnamese people.

### III

Vietnam might not be of any immediate economic importance to the US but it is strategically important in the whole imperialist system. Hence the persistent danger of Washington sabotaging the present agreement in pursuit of its earlier nefarious goals in Vietnam. It was the United States which destroyed the 1954 Geneva agreement. Whether the present agreement on Vietnam will lead to peace or meet the fate of the 1954 agreement depends solely on the United States. In most of their essentials the January 27 Armistice agreement and the 12-power declaration of March 2 bears a close resemblance to the 1954 Accords. The prospects of a political settlement to be worked out by the South Vietnamese depends on the American attitude through their mouthpiece Thieu. The cease-fire behaviour of Thieu has raised some doubts about

US intentions. Is the United States merely playing for Kissinger's 'decent interval' between the time of its exit from Vietnam and the time of the inevitable demise of their proteges in Saigon? The Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam have always expressed their readiness to let the US vacate its aggression without 'losing its face'.

It might be too early to say what the US is exactly up to in Vietnam. But some disturbing pointers are already discernible in the murky situation. The Thieu regime's continued military assaults against PRG-controlled territory in South Vietnam are violative of the cease-fire agreement. His orders to shoot Communists and destroy their organisational infrastructure militate against the very spirit of peaceful settlement. The attacks against DRV and PRG delegates by Thieu's hoodlums are reminiscent of the US-Diem inspired attacks against the Polish and Indian delegates to the International Control Commission in 1955. The retention of thousands of US military personnel in South Vietnam under the euphemistic label of 'advisers' and 'technicians' suggests that US may wreck the present agreement in much the same fashion as it torpedoed the Geneva agreement on Vietnam.

The Nixon doctrine enjoins on client states to provide the manpower—because non-white lives are cheap and dispensable—while the United States would provide the rest of the resources. The massive pre-cessate-fire inflow of US arms into South Vietnam shows that America still clings on to the application of Nixon doctrine in Vietnam. In sheer size and equipment, the puppet South Vietnamese troops exceeding a million are superior to those of their rivals in Vietnam. However, the 1972 offensive of the liberation forces has proved that they are as inefficient and ineffective as ever. But the US warning that its naval and air forces would swing back into action over Vietnam if peace was not 'respected', and the readiness with which it resumed post-cessate-fire B-52 strikes against Laos—may well be portents of things to come. While the Vietnamese people have proved that no power can detract them from being the masters of their own political destiny, peace-loving forces all over the world must be cautious about any renewed US attempt to frustrate the peace settlement in Vietnam.

<sup>1</sup> These figures have mainly been drawn from : International Commission of Inquiry into US War Crimes in Indochina, *The Effect of Modern Weapons on the Human Environment in Indochina Documents Presented at a Hearing Organised by the International Commission in Cooperation with the Stockholm Conference on Vietnam and the Swedish Committee on Vietnam*, Stockholm, 1972 ; Milton Leitenberg, "America in Vietnam : Statistics of War", *Survival*, November-December 1972 and newspaper reports.

<sup>2</sup> Fred Braufman, "Air War : The Third Indochina War", International Commission of Inquiry, *op. cit.*, p 4.

<sup>3</sup> Department of State Bulletin, July 20, 1953, p 101.

<sup>4</sup> *New York Times*, July 4, 1954.

- <sup>6</sup> Roscoe Drumond and Gaston Coblenz, *Duel at the Brink: John Foster Dulles' Command of American Power*, New York, 1960, pp 116-23; also see C L Sulzberger, "Foreign Affairs: The Bipartisan Swamp", *New York Times*, September 10, 1967.
- <sup>6</sup> See the map showing areas of South Vietnam under French control in Henri Navarre (former Chief of the French Union Forces in Indochina), *Agonie de l'Indochine*, Paris, 1953, p 37.
- <sup>7</sup> *Pentagon Papers: The Secret History of the Vietnam War*, the complete and unabridged series as published by the *New York Times*, New York, 1971, p 2.
- <sup>8</sup> David Hotham, "General Consideration of American Programs", in Richard W Lindholm, (ed), *Vietnam: The First Five Years*, Michigan, 1959, p 349. For CIA's support of Diem; see *Pentagon Papers*, pp 19-20. See also Robert Scheer and Warren Hinckle, "The Vietnam Lobby", in Marcus G Raskin and Bernard B Fall, (eds), *The Vietnam Reader*, New York, 1965, pp 66-81, and Felix Greene, *Vietnam! Vietnam!*, London, 1967, p 131.
- <sup>9</sup> In his *Report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee*, Senator Mike Mansfield remarked: "in the event that the Diem government falls the United States should consider an immediate suspension of all aid to Vietnam". US Senate, *Congressional Records*, 83 Congress, Session 2, Vol 100, Pt 12, p 16263. General Lawton Collins, President Eisenhower's Special Ambassador threatened that the US would give aid to "government of Diem and his government only", *New York Times*, November 18, 1954, and that it would not train or aid any Vietnamese army "that does not give complete obedience to Diem", November 17, 1954. Between March-April 1954 alone, Diem spent about \$ 12 million on bribes to keep himself in power. Bernard Fall, *The Two Vietnams: A Political and Military Analysis*, London, 1963, p 246.
- <sup>10</sup> Richard Falk, "Impressions of Visit to Hanoi", in de l' Association Internationale des Juristes Democrates, *Conference Mondiale de Juristes pour le Vietnam*, Brussels, 1968, p 37.
- <sup>11</sup> *Pentagon Papers*, p 1.
- <sup>12</sup> Dwight D Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change: The White House Years, 1950-56*, London, 1963, p 372.
- <sup>13</sup> Raskin and Fall, *op. cit.*, p 137.
- <sup>14</sup> *Pentagon Papers*, p 244.
- <sup>15</sup> *Sixth Report of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam*, para 84.
- <sup>16</sup> "Lansdale Team's Report on covert Saigon Mission in '54 and '55", *Pentagon Papers*, Document No 151, pp 53-66.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p 16.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p 18.
- <sup>19</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, London, April 15, 1966.
- <sup>20</sup> *Pentagon Papers*, p 24.
- <sup>21</sup> Richard Goodwin, *Triumph or Tragedy: Reflections on Vietnam*, New York, 1966, p 26.
- <sup>22</sup> Jean Lacouture, *Vietnam: Between Two Truces*, New York, 1966, p 35.
- <sup>23</sup> *New York Times*, December 9, 1963.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, August 13, 1964.
- <sup>25</sup> See David Kraslow and Stuart H Loory, *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam*, New York, 1968; Harold Wilson, *The Labour Government, 1964-1970: A Personal Record*, London, 1971, Chapter 19. See also *Pentagon Papers*.

*Architecture of Socialism*

TO the large division of social labour between agricultural labour and industrial labour operated by the capitalist system corresponds the territorial structure composed of town and country. The antagonism between town and country is a phenomenon which has accompanied the development of civilised society from its origin. The theoreticians of scientific socialism demonstrated, in the first half of the nineteenth century, how the concentration of population, instruments of production and necessities of life characterise the town while the country is characterised by its isolation and separation.

Bourgeois sociology emphasised these differences, tipping the scale in favour of the town. The greater possibilities of exchanges and contacts of all types characteristic of the towns qualified positively these small areas of territory in comparison with the rural type of settlement.

The ideological character of this attitude becomes clear when we analyse the parameter in which this sociology judges the different human settlements on its own values: 'Social mobility' or vertical mobility, that is, passage from one social stratum to another, is the sociologic incarnation of the principle of economic liberalism—the 'theoretical' liberty of the

people to attempt social and economic escalation. According to the classical formulation of the analysis of this 'mobility', a society is as democratic as its vertical mobility.

Therefore, it refers to an 'egalitarian', 'classless' or 'open' society wherein it is equally possible for every individual to fulfil those tasks and social functions of which he is personally capable.

With the enormous specialisation of activities which permits, with the greater heterogeneity of its population, the presence of those institutions which are called 'instruments' of social mobility—universities, cultural centres, the centres of political power—it is evident that the town offers greater occasions of passage from one social class to another than does the country with its structure still caste-ridden and scarcely stratified. Such is the contention of this ideological position.

But if we examine the real mechanism of the urban social structure, that is, the 'production relations', we discover how ill-conceived this idea of social mobility is. Social mobility is only the individual's liberty to sell his labour power. Therefore this capitalist mobility presupposes alienated labour.

The 'Index of Social Density' proposed some years ago envisaged the determination of the 'degree of urbanisation', of a settlement on the basis of the number of exchanges and contacts operated. But this degree of urbanisation, besides being a difficult revelation, is scarcely significant from a qualitative point of view. That is to say, it says nothing of the quality of the fluxes of relations. The problem of the qualification of these fluxes is, on the contrary, extremely important.

In fact, if a new series of techniques of communication is able today to increase the collective enjoyment of the products of urban civilisation, many of these instruments offer in reality an indirect, passive and culturally subordinated participation. This is the specific case of the instruments of mass communication (cinema, radio, newspapers and so forth) which act as covert persuaders and diffusers of the ideology of the ruling class.

The consequence of this is the dismemberment and fragmentation of the town. The isolation of the individual is proposed again in its totality and ever more dramatic form. When the instruments of mass communication have the upper hand, the social cohesion which has to support urban life is also fragmented. The rhythm of life of the workers is conditioned, and petty-bourgeois values are diffused, especially at the level of consumption. The urban structure of the modern industrial metropolis tends to exalt this individualism. It predisposes physical accessibility to the centres of consumption in general—commercial centre, supermarket, cinema—breaking the segregation of the old quarters but above all, their cohesion, and repositing with the dispersion on the territory of human contacts, both physical segregation and social segregation. This 'intentional isolation', which is a tragic reality of contemporary urban planning, can also contain a 'controlled reintegration' of

the workers according to the plannable necessities of production and consumption.

This is the meaning of all the social structures which today characterise false modern town planning. The cultural and recreation centres and similar institutions are organised in order that the pseudo-collectivity, after a certain period of use, can be reintegrated into the system. This means that the 'duality' of use of the territory has an identical aspect: the exploitation and the alienation of the working masses by the capitalist class.

This also means that a town of the privileged and a country of the exploited do not exist as such. There exists, rather, a territory made of town and country exploited in their entirety by a privileged class.

Here lies the validity of Marx's statement that the contradiction between town and country is the crassest expression of the individual under division of labour performing a determinate activity which is imposed on him and hence the alienation which constrains one to the state of an 'urban animal' and the other to a 'rural animal', and renews every day the conflicts between their interests.

Thus, if the first task of territorial planning is to rectify the inequilibrium extant in the territory, the urban-centric method which tries to generalise in the territory the typical effects of the town is unacceptable. The term 'town' is the fruit of the same contradiction, the specular term of what we would want to eliminate, the 'country'.

Therefore, all the socio-urban solutions which theorise in regard to the 'town-effect' and the 'metropolis of equilibrium' are completely misconceived. It is necessary to pose in its totality the problem of the use of the territory, solving in another direction that which remains the main task, 'the overcoming of the antithesis, town *versus* country'. Every planning process tends to discriminate and ordain the fluxes of relations.

An 'only technical' plan would be based upon the fluxes of merchandise and people, that is, the traffic and the problems of viability connected with it. An 'only economic' plan would be built on the basis of the exigencies of production, ordaining the fluxes of relation between the activities without attempting the qualification of the fluxes.

Consequently, it can be affirmed that it is only when the hierarchy of the fluxes of relations is established on the basis of the judgments of values, that we have the political qualifications of the objectives of the plan.

## II

Marx affirms that

Men can be distinguished from animals by their consciousness, by religion or by anything one likes. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence.<sup>1</sup>

The history of man begins, therefore, with his work. In the pro-

cess of this work, his reflexes were developed, as was the thinking with which it was possible to begin the 'humanisation' of nature. The reciprocal exchange of activities within the primitive horde transformed it into a 'productive force' and therefore into that particular form of material life which is called 'social life'.<sup>2</sup>

Work, which has brought man to the top of the natural order, is that work by which the individual can participate in an active and productive community, and which enhances the possibility for the individual to enjoy the fruits of collective production.

It is precisely in this bilateral and simultaneous relation between the collective participation in production and collective utilisation of the product that the sense of belonging to the collective, with which one is physically linked, is realised.

If, therefore, the human being is to be understood in the productive movement, that is, if man is a man because he is a producer, the relations which spring from the social aspects of production are evidently important. These relations thus assume a prominent dimension in comparison with others and within these alone can be found the creative relations capable of developing the human personality in its totality.

As Baburov puts it :

Human relations in the process of production constitute the major factor which determines the vital activity of the individual. Only by entering into production relations does a man become a valid member of society, realise and verify his own capacities and validate the knowledge he has gained during his period of instruction. In brief, only under the influence of these production relations is developed the sum total of the relations into which the mature individual of a determinate society enters.<sup>3</sup>

But if these are the concepts of man and creative relations in reference to which we must pose the basis of a true social science, we must also remember that these concepts are far from concrete realisation in most contemporary societies. We must be clear, therefore, that the spontaneous development of a class society has oppressed and dehumanised man and deprived him of the instruments of production, of the possibility to guide his own actions. It has deprived him of his personal liberty.

And this, because the capitalist division of labour has divorced the intellectual aspect of work from the purely physical; and because further, it has reduced the physical aspect to unilateral obedience to requirements dictated by the rhythm and movement of the machine.

These few general reflections are sufficient to bring into focus two fundamental concepts for a new formulation of the essence of town planning (architecture) :

a) The contradictions existing at the territorial level—discontinuity of development, segregated zones, hydro-geologic calamities, abnormal development of urban centres, exodus from the countryside and so on—

are the direct consequences of the existing production relations. For this reason, every physical intervention in the territory which attempts to solve such problems is irremediably doomed if it does not incorporate a precise plan which aims primarily at resolving these contradictions at the structural level.

b) The elimination of exploitation does not automatically do away with the alienation of labour but is the basic prerequisite for achieving such a change. Physical planning has to be part of the larger process of 'construction of civilisation' which has as its objective the 'integral man' and the development of the creative relations which derive from his participation in social work. When socialism is interpreted merely as a new administration of a 'received society' and not as a destruction and a reconstruction of a new 'social being', it is not only impossible to achieve a socialist architecture but what is incomparably worse, it is also impossible to achieve socialism.

### III

Consider the most advanced example of contemporary town planning theory. There is, sometimes, a recognition of the necessity of resolving the most evident contradictions of class divisions in society. Most often that necessity remains unresolved, precisely because of the lack of a new social vision of life and of the social forces involved. Human work continues to be regarded as slavery, damnation—inevitably fragmented into a series of insignificant episodes. Human activity is irrevocably divided up and divorced from man's control. These facets of human activity cannot, in the logic of this theory, be reintegrated into one unified activity. Instead, they are rationalised and ordered in their separation.

The logical consequence of this attitude is the idea, common to many shades of opinion, of a plan based on the functional separation of the different zones of the town: the work zone, the commercial zone, the residential zone, and so on. The hierarchy of these zones can be determined with reference to a civic centre, or a centre of administration. The zones can be parts of a linear form or a radio-centric form; are expandable or repeatable; can even be of a predetermined dimension. What is never considered is the segregation and alienation implied in such a proposal.

Capitalistic development tends to confirm this division just for the intrinsic exigencies of 'functionality'. Thus, the various human activities are considered isolated, parallel universes with separate solutions. Within the universe of town planning (architecture), very precise instruments can be prepared and complex systems of discipline invented. Above all, there can be developed elaborate and sophisticated instruments of rationalisation used by the privileged class to conserve and expand their institutions of control.

Thus are born the socio-urban theories of 'neighbourhood', 'urban effect', 'cultural integration' and so on, with which contemporary town

planning processes are deeply impregnated.

Essentially, two vast cultural streams can be recognised :

a) First, the stream which regards the housing aspect as the cardinal point of a new territorial organisation, a 'stream which has risen from an exact analysis of the bourgeois town, its organisation into directive and subordinate areas. These coincide with the workers' quarters, the non-town.

'Populist equivocation' takes place when the target is set to make 'town' the popular residential area of the workers, assuming it to be the structural fabric of the new urban organisation. In researching the elements necessary to realise a communal life, this particular type of town planning opens the door to false problems such as the 'optimum' dimension of the 'unit', or of the 'communal potential' of a service (the school, most often). Thus are 'invented criteria, based on sociological considerations, for defining the optimum dimension of the population which can inhabit a particular area of the town; the geographic limits wherein a direct friend-relationship is possible; and the dimension of a group capable of 'political activity'. Or, on the basis of economic considerations, the functional efficiency of a particular service is established, emphasising the relation between the service and the population served; the distance between the services, the degrees of infrastructurisation, and so forth. The town planning model innate in this stream is the 'quarter'. The theoretical individual of the quarter moves from the 'family' dimension to the 'collective' dimension, via institutions like common courtyards, the school, the family planning clinic, the church in Europe, the temple in India, or the social centre (if there is one).

The factor of production is not taken into account and the time which a man spends at work is considered wasted time. From the socio-town planning point of view, while a man works he is not a man.

b) The other, more recent, 'stream of town planning' thought, starting from the unsuccessful results of the first—and polemically opposed to it—tries to overcome the restrictive limits of the residential community, by proposing the integration of the community in the Urban Regional Scale.

In order to achieve this they think of 'democratising', in reality, generalising, the territorial elements which can offer possibilities of contact and exchange between individuals. However, unable to detach themselves from the old misconceptions, these proposals retrace traditional ideas and tendencies. They identify in the time off from work, the moment of 'socio-cultural realisation' of the individual. Consequently, they identify in the services invented for free time the territorial elements to be generalised. Thus are born the 'grand complexes' (administrative centres, for example), which with a series of tertiary elements (offices, banks, shops, cinemas) are regarded as fulcra of the territorial organisation. The non-consideration of the productive processes—which remain discarded as grey areas of the territory—reduces these contemporary

monuments to enormous centres of consumption. The valency of an individual in his relationships is proportional to his ability to consume merchandise and merchandised culture.

Both these town planning streams reach the same conclusion because they assume, though in varying degrees, a proposition that cannot be accepted: human work is inevitably alienated.

This is the focal point of the whole problem.

#### IV

Two inferences are possible. They are: 1) the refutation of the conceptual categories (living, working, leisure and circulation) into which human activity has been divided, and which have been assumed as absolute data in contemporary town planning practice;

2) Some indications which would renew the methodological attitude in relation to the territorial phenomena and their organisation.

To these ends, we shall refer to the town planning theory elaborated by Le Corbusier and by the Ascoral group; and to the guiding principles of the Athens Charter. This town planning theory represents the only positive attempt to systematise and codify a certain number of operative principles, and is thus directly confrontable. According to the Athens Charter, the fundamental functions to be resolved by a plan are four. Town planning has four principal functions: living, working, recreation of the body and the soul, circulation. These four functions which constitute the fundamentals of town planning cover immense ground, because town planning is the consequence of a mode of thought, applied to public life with a technic action.

Town planning (architecture) is therefore the consequence of a *mode of thought*, and thus has its origins in a precise philosophy, in a particular conception of the world. So far, all is well. But when Le Corbusier conveys the hope of the realisation of his programme to a moralistic ethic built of 'fraternal embrace', of 'better men', of 'enlightened leaders', it is no longer possible to accept this concept.

In reference to a different interpretation of human history, the historical materialist conception, it is obvious that the four categories enumerated earlier will undergo profound change. Specifically, the two categories of work and leisure—direct consequences of a philosophic conception which views the one as the end of the other, or vice versa—have to be clearly refuted. Only their unification can achieve a larger objective. These two activities, which are today in contraposition, have to be integrated in a more complex activity which can be called, instrumentally, *creative production*.

The specific study of the Asiatic Mode of Production will contribute largely towards clarification of this new category. The 'town planning key' (to use Le Corbusier's terminology) will thus be two: 'to live' and 'to produce'. This, however, presupposes a profound structural modification of the concepts of living and producing as they are normally in use

today.

*Living*: "The unit of habitation—the house and its extensions; instruments which have to (a) facilitate existence and ensure the physical and moral health of the inhabitants; (b) facilitate the continuation of the species, providing the necessary facilities for a complete education; (c) bring the joy of life, engender and develop the social sensibilities which educate the civic virtues." Such are the functions attributed to residential organisation in Le Corbusier's scheme. Quite obviously, these functions are still valid.

But we must not equivocate and consider the dwelling unit as the refuge of the family, refuge from an inhuman social life, from a town that is basically inimical, without attempting to resolve the situation at its real origins, namely, the production relations. Once this has been changed, and we move towards the elimination of the alienation of work, the dwelling as a refuge has no more reason to exist, and the family cannot be considered as the basic biological unit of human society. To persist, still, in the attitude of Le Corbusier signifies a conscious attempt at rationalisation of the superstructural contradictions that grow as part of the class-based development of the capitalistic society of today. We must, therefore, categorically negate the mechanism typical of rationalist bourgeois thought, which, starting from the dwelling unit, reaches by summation the whole city.

What, then, becomes of housing? It regains its original limited function, that of an instrument finalised to the satisfaction of certain elemental needs of the individual and the family group. These are the same needs enumerated by Le Corbusier: shelter from the atmospheric agents, eating, sleeping, making love, raising children and so on. However, it must be clearly borne in mind that these are the physical and psychological necessities nearer to the animal aspect of the man; and that it is not with these that we can find his essence and his future development. Living, therefore, has to be a secondary factor in relation to the most important aspect of human activity, work and the place where work is conducted. In this particular interpretation, the observation of Le Corbusier about the formal organisation of the dwelling, its necessities of light and greenery can still be considered valid.

### *Creative Production*

As has been observed, this category incorporates and unifies those of *work* and *leisure*, and, at the same time, transforms them radically. It is this new category which has to achieve the organisation of the territorial structure: because only in this category exist all the activities which can resolve the real human necessities of the community.

The uncritical acceptance of the present division of work as an immutable fact of human organisation permits Le Corbusier to theorise on the existence of specific groups of activities to which correspond determinate physical organisms: workshops, factories, offices, shops, ware-

houses and agricultural land.

Going into detail, Le Corbusier rationalises these typologies, reaching contrived proposals such as 'the factory in the green', or 'the big glass wall on the landscape', with the aim of giving cheer to the factory workers. These, without doubt, are interesting expedients. They are clearly unable to resolve the problem of alienated labour consequent to the exploitation of the working class.

Thus, the 'recreation centres' have to be refuted especially in the aspect of 'facilities for cultural diversions'. Here once again, particular typologies (theatres, libraries and so on) or possible groups (associations, circles), are divorced from the creative (productive) aspect and offered to the working masses as compensation for deeply alienated activity.

Under socialism, the concept of creative production will become the essence, no longer of the town, but of the new organisation of the human settlement on the territory. This will be an irreversible process starting from the country and tending to the "urbanisation of the country and the ruralisation of the town". To this reunification of human activity must correspond a complex settlement organisation encompassing the new place of work, the new schools, the new centres of reunion, the places for artistic performances and so on. This will not be a summation of existing elements or of their redistribution, but an integration which modifies the nature of each of these activities. It must be remembered at this point that we are dealing with things that can be realised, initially, with mud and bamboo.

The basic social nucleus of territorial organisation will be the group of associated producers—the agricultural cooperatives, the workers' communes and so on, which with the self-administration of the production complex can control, organise and direct their portion of the settlement, naturally, in the totality of their aspects: productive, formal (the new architect is the people), spectacular and so on.

To this nucleus will correspond a polyvalential space within which the groups organise the particular spaces for their own activities—which from time to time will be manual or intellectual, but at all times in the collective dimension.

All this will be viewed not as self-sufficient, as a closed circle, as a 'phalanstere'. They will be strictly and scientifically integrated and related to the other productive complexes which together will form the new settlement organisation total.

<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx, *Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 1859.

<sup>2</sup> This moment has been identified by Indian Marxist historians as the *Tajna* mode of production.

<sup>3</sup> A Baburov and others, *The Ideal Communist City*, compiled by Giancarlo de Carlo, Milan, 1961.

KP 3558

P SUNDARATTA

## *Telangana People's Armed Struggle, 1946-51*

### PART FOUR

#### BACKGROUND TO A MOMENTOUS DECISION

THE Congress Government which had ordered the entry of the Indian Army into Hyderabad State had ended the Razakar menace and the dynastic rule of the Nizam. However, it permitted the Nizam to continue as Rajpramukh, keeping intact the feudal boundaries of the State and directed its main attack against the hard-won gains of the Telangana peasantry and the Communist Party and the Andhra Mahasabha which was leading the struggle. The destruction of the popular democratic peasant movement and of the Communist Party became the principal aim and the immediate task of the Government of India and its armed forces.

The crucial question posed before the fighting Telangana peasantry and the Communist Party was whether we should continue the armed guerrilla resistance against the attacks of the Union armed forces, in defence of the peasant's land and other democratic rights. Alternatively, should we surrender our arms to the Congress Government's armies and betray the trust placed in our Party by the fighting people of Telangana? Were we to abandon the partisan armed resistance and adopt legal forms of struggle and agitation, by leave of the military rule of the Congress Government in the State?

Over this life-or-death question, two sharply opposed views

emerged among the leaders of the Communist Party.

One section, whose views were systematically presented by Ravi Narayana Reddy in the notorious document, *Naked Truth of Telangana*, advocated the abandonment of partisan armed resistance against the armed attacks of the Indian Union armies and the adoption of open and legal forms of struggle and agitation. The main arguments of those who took the slogan of abandoning the partisan resistance were : (a) A large section of those who were supporting the Telangana armed struggle till the entry of the Indian armies (including the rich peasantry and the liberal landlords) would turn hostile to the partisan struggle; (b) The people would look upon the armies of the Congress Government not as oppressors but as liberators; (c) The armed struggle in a small area like Telangana could not defend and sustain itself until countrywide armed struggles, for which there was no possibility, broke out; (d) Our armed squads were either poorly armed or virtually unarmed and could not resist the well-equipped Indian armies and their superior numbers.

The Visalandhra Communist Committee opposed this view and advocated the slogan of armed partisan resistance against the attacks launched by the Union armies on the gains of the Telangana peasantry. Its arguments were :

a) The big gains of the Telangana peasantry, in particular the 10 lakh acres of land distributed among them, must be defended. These gains should not be allowed to be snatched away by the class enemies without a bitter resistance and fight;

b) The national and international situation was favourable to the armed partisan struggle. The Telangana struggle was the beginning of the liberation struggle against the bourgeois-landlord Government of the Congress party. It demonstrated that the Indian revolution was more akin to the Chinese Revolution than to the classical Russian Revolution. As the Andhra Secretariat put it in its May 1948 document :

Our revolution in many respects differs from the classical Russian Revolution, but to a great extent is similar to that of the Chinese Revolution. The perspective likely is not that of a general strike and armed uprising leading to the liberation of the rural side, but of dogged resistance and prolonged civil war in the form of agrarian revolution culminating in the capture of political power by the Democratic Front. . . . Keeping all this in view, in areas where we are a good proportion in the masses as in certain parts of Andhra, Kerala and Bengal the time has come to think in terms of guerrilla warfare (Chinese way) against the military onslaughts of the Nehru Government which is bent upon mercilessly liquidating us.

c) The Andhra theses advocated a united front which included the rich peasantry and the middle bourgeoisie as the allies of the proletariat in the people's democratic revolution. They asserted that such a wide front of armed struggle could take shape under the leadership of the Communist Party and that the objective conditions for the materialisa-

tion of these aims were rapidly maturing. A prolonged armed resistance like that of Telangana alone would bring about such favourable conditions.

The Polit Bureau elected at the Second Party Congress had rejected the entire theses of the Andhra Secretariat as gross reformism and had launched an attack on the concept of the Chinese path, characterising it as a deviation from Marxism-Leninism. The Polit Bureau had maintained that there was only one path and that was the path of the Russian Revolution—the political general strike and the armed uprising of workers in the cities to capture power.

The Polit Bureau, however, had strongly advocated the slogan of armed resistance in Telangana as this might hasten the working class general strike and armed uprising in the anticipated post-war revolutionary crisis. The Communist Party of India at its Second Party Congress in February-March 1948 had raised the slogan : “The Telangana way is our way”. It had declared all-out support to the armed struggle of Telangana, called for developing similar struggles in several other parts of the country and given a call to develop working class movements in support of the Telangana struggle—all ultimately leading to armed insurrection.

There had been glorious struggles such as the Vayalar-Punnappa struggle in Kerala State. There were the armed peasant actions in certain areas of West Bengal and Tripura and the Warli peasant revolt in Bombay. There had taken place in different parts of the country a number of militant peasant struggles—struggles where some sort of armed clashes had taken place between the peasantry and the police—although none of them had been sustained or developed into partisan armed struggle.

*The working class, which had come out in support of the revolt in the Royal Indian Navy and for the release of the Indian National Army prisoners during the 1945-47 period, could not be brought into effective action in support of the Telangana peasant armed struggle. There were no solidarity strikes in support of the Telangana struggle, either before the intervention of the Indian Union armies in September 1948 or during the three long years of the Telangana armed resistance upto October 1951. The call for a general strike of the railway workers on their own specific demands had also not materialised except in some centres. The Telangana armed struggle alone had to carry the brunt of the offensive let loose by the armed forces of the Indian Government, with the subjectively conceived aim of overthrowing the Nehru Government.*

In the international arena the People's Republic of China had been established following the victory of the Revolution in October 1949. The people of Vietnam led by its Communist Party and its beloved leader Ho Chi Minh were putting up fierce armed resistance against the attacks of the French imperialists who were attempting to reimpose their colonial rule, and inflicting powerful blows against the imperialists although this struggle was exacting tremendous sacrifices from the people of Vietnam. The People's Democratic Republic of Korea assisted by the huge volunteer army of the People's Republic of China had rolled back the US and

allied armies of aggression to the 37th parallel. This was the period when the US armies had landed in Taiwan to defend the puppet regime of Chiang Kai-shek. These and similar other revolutionary struggles as in Burma, Malaya, the Philippines and elsewhere seemed to be of a very, very protracted nature.

The US imperialists after succeeding in eliminating the Communists from the newly established post-war Governments of France and Italy had set to work to consolidate the monopolist-led regimes through launching plans such as Marshall Aid and drawing these countries into military pacts such as NATO.

The Nehru Government had finally prepared its new Constitution and declared India a Republic, even though the new Republic was made a member of the British Commonwealth. It was able politically to consolidate its newly-gained power. It had succeeded in merging all the princely states into the Indian Union, although enormous concessions were given to the former princes and nawabs. A cease-fire agreement had been concluded in Kashmir, thus easing Indo-Pakistan relations which had been strained in the communal massacres and in the Kashmir war. *The tide of the post-revolutionary wave had definitely receded and the new Congress Government had been successful in tiding over the post-war crisis and the consequent mass upheavals.*

We have already shown how a good number of cadre and area committees in the Telangana region raised their voice of opposition to the continuation of armed partisan resistance against the armies of the Indian Union after the 'police action'. We have also stated how, owing to the newly-bred illusions about the Nehru Government and its promise of a democratic set-up in Hyderabad State, vigilance was slackened, squads were disbanded and arms dumped, all this leading to the large-scale arrest of our Party workers and fighting militants.

But because of Party loyalty and the sense of discipline which made them abide by the Party line, the line of continuing the armed guerrilla resistance finally prevailed. Besides this sense of discipline, the return of the hated *deshmukhs*, landlords, village *patels* and *patwaris*, their frenzied attempts to seize back the peasants' lands and the terror unleashed by them had roused the indignation of the workers of the Communist Party and the Andhra Mahasabha. These cadres of Telangana began reorganising themselves into squads to resist the armed attacks of the Union military and police.

We have also described earlier how a number of Andhra Mahasabha cadre of taluk, zonal, area and district levels were driven out by the military raids from the areas of the plains and thickly populated bases into the forest belts for shelter and self-preservation. These comrades by their dogged and death-defying resistance were able to strike terror among the landlords, thus preventing these hated exploiters from returning to the villages and from stabilising their hold on their landed estates and farms. *This armed partisan resistance could not be wiped out even*

though the Union Congress Government had deployed 50,000 armed personnel and was spending at an average Rs 10 crores to Rs 15 crores per year. The armed partisans belonging to the Communist Party and the Andhra Mahasabha were shedding their blood in the unequal struggle with the far superior armed forces of the Congress Government.

Under these most trying and desperate conditions it was quite natural that the question was raised : how long could this continue? Why was it that similar armed struggle could not be organised in any other area and any other state in the Indian Union to lend support to the Telangana struggle?

The leadership of the Telangana armed struggle under the pressure of the fighting ranks and provoked by the brutal repression let loose on the adjoining Andhra districts had attempted to extend the area of the armed guerrilla resistance. This did not succeed, and the armed police and landlord goondas had resorted to brutal murder of the Communist cadre.

Three hundred comrades had been killed. The rest of the militant workers of the Party had to be shifted from these districts either to the forest areas or to some distant places in other states. Thus, there was a tremendous dislocation of the Party organisation. The problem of 'what next?' faced the leadership of the Visalandhra Committee.

The situation in the rest of the country was no better. The Party and the revolutionary movement, faced with the cruel police attacks of the Congress Government on the one hand and the wrong and sectarian policies pursued by the all-India leadership on the other, had been extremely weakened and disunited. A large number of cadre and leaders had been arrested and detained in jails.

It was against such a background that an editorial appeared in *For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy* sharply criticising the political line pursued by the top leadership of the Communist Party of India. Following this and the consequent inner-Party discussions and struggle, a drastic reshuffle of the Central Committee took place. A new Polit Bureau with C Rajeswar Rao as General Secretary was elected by the reconstituted Central Committee.

The new political line worked out by the Central Committee and the Polit Bureau was the rejection of the programmatic understanding given in the Second Party Congress and subsequently elaborated in what was called the 'Tactical Line'; the rejection of the thesis of the single-stage revolution, that is, the intertwining of the democratic and socialist stages of the Indian revolution; the rejection of the idea that the entire bourgeoisie including the rich peasantry had been transformed into enemies of the people's democratic revolution; and upholding the concept of the Chinese path for the Indian revolution and advocating the development of extensive agrarian struggles on the pattern of Telangana wherever conditions permitted this.

There was stiff opposition to this new political line, from an extreme

right opportunist angle. The Party headquarters in Bombay was made the centre of this new opposition and S A Dange, Ajoy Kumar Ghosh and S V Ghate assumed leadership of this inner-Party opposition. While this new opposition was allowed to function legally, the central leadership as well as the leaders of the Telangana armed resistance had to function underground. *In short, the situation within the Party had deteriorated very much and the Party was split into different trends and factions.*

Soon after it was elected, the new Polit Bureau took stock of the grave ideological-political situation of the Party and came to the conclusion that restoration of the political-ideological and organisational unity inside the Communist Party of India was possible only if it could secure the guidance and assistance of the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), a leadership which commanded the highest authority in the world Communist movement. The new Polit Bureau immediately approached the leadership of the CPSU and Comrade Stalin, who readily agreed to render all fraternal assistance in resolving the difficult political-organisational and ideological problems that confronted the CPI.

However, the 'legal opposition' led by the Party headquarters in Bombay continued its disruptive activities even after knowing that the Polit Bureau was seeking the help of the CPSU and Comrade Stalin to resolve the inner-Party controversies. This disruption harmed the partisan armed struggle of Telangana the most although the immense damage it did to the Party and the mass movement in general cannot be underestimated.

A delegation of our Party comprising C Rajeswar Rao, Basavapunnaiah, Ajoy Kumar Ghosh and S A Dange was deputed to hold discussions with the leaders of the CPSU and Comrade Stalin and seek clarification on all the issues that were at dispute inside the CPI. The Central Committee of the CPSU set up a Commission comprising Comrades Stalin, Molotov, Malenkov and Suslov and headed by Comrade Stalin to assist our Party delegation in this respect.

A word on the fraternal assistance given by the CPSU and Comrade Stalin. *So far, we have scrupulously avoided any public mention of these discussions with the leaders of the CPSU and the fraternal criticism and advice given by them, lest this should be utilised by our class enemies to unleash a smear campaign against the CPSU and our Party. Since the present leaders of the Right Communist Party such as Dange and Rajeswar Rao have already referred to these fraternal discussions and decisions in the open press and since the name of Stalin has been dragged in by Rajeswar Rao, in connection with the Telangana struggle and its lessons, we are left with no option but to clarify the nature of these discussions and the decisions arrived at by our Party following the discussions.*

The issues of controversy related to two separate topics: (i) The class assessment of the transfer of political power to the leaders of the Indian National Congress, the exact stages of the Indian revolution and the class strategy or alliance for the revolution; (ii) The possible path of

the Indian revolution, in other words, whether it was the Russian or Chinese path; the nature of the Telangana armed struggle; the different phases of the peasant partisan armed struggle and the need to avoid equating it with the armed struggle for political power. The first concerned the Programme of the Party and the second the tactical questions of principle, theory and their concrete application to a concrete situation.

The main conclusion on the first topic were incorporated into the Draft Programme of the Communist Party of India first printed and published in April 1951, which was amended and adopted by the All India Party Conference held in October 1951, and later by the Madurai Party Congress in 1953. However, it was put in abeyance by the Palghat Party Congress in 1966 on the ground that it needed some important changes.

The Draft published in April 1951 (a) stated that the new state that came into existence was essentially the same old imperialist state and that the Congress Government was installed in power by the consent of the British imperialists as it was a Government pledged to the protection and preservation of British capital in India; (b) rejected the understanding of the theses of the Second Party Congress which placed the entire bourgeoisie including the rich peasantry outside the pale of the People's Democratic Front and visualised the possibility of winning over the entire Indian bourgeoisie excepting some individuals and groups among the big bourgeoisie who might betray the revolution; and (c) it corrected the erroneous theory of the intertwining of the two stages of the revolution, although the class alliance it advocated was tantamount to that of the stage of the all-in general united front against imperialism and its feudal allies.

This Programme of 1951 and some of its major propositions were subsequently given up and a new Party Programme adopted in 1964 at our Seventh Party Congress. The present Programme definitely lays down that the state that came into existence after the transfer of power in 1947 was a bourgeois-landlord state led by the big bourgeoisie which is allying with feudal and semi-feudal landlordism and collaborating with foreign finance capital in pursuit of the capitalist path of development. The class alliance that our Party Programme advocates for achieving the revolution comprises workers, peasants, the middle classes and the non-big bourgeoisie, directed against the big bourgeois-led state and Government. The core of this People's Democratic Front is, of course, the worker-peasant alliance and its leadership rests with the working class and its Party. Our revolution at this stage is directed against landlordism, the big bourgeoisie and foreign finance capital. *The stage of the revolution is not socialist but People's Democratic, which does not aim at the liquidation of capitalism as such but is directed only against monopoly capitalists and foreign imperialists besides feudal and semi-feudal landlords.*

The second topic of discussions between our Party delegation and the Commission of the CPSU concerned the possible path of the Indian

revolution and the theory and principles of tactics. This, too, was adopted at the All India Conference in 1951 and published under the title, *Statement of Policy*. We reproduce below the salient extracts from this document along with our clarification (parts not within quotation marks) of the understanding arrived at during that time.

### *India's Path to Revolution*

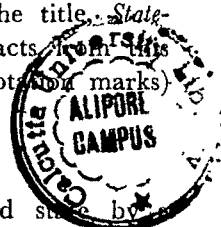
The replacement of the present bourgeois-landlord state by a people's democratic state is possible only through revolution. As the *Statement of Policy* put it :

"There are a large number of people who think that this Government can be replaced by a people's democratic Government by utilising the parliament ushered in by the new Constitution. Such feelings are encouraged and fed not only by this Government and the vested interests but even by the right-wing socialists, who preach that the very fact of a strong opposition party on the parliamentary floor will shake the Government and make it topple down.

"But hardly had the people started to believe in the efficacy of the new Constitution, which they thought was the outcome of their anti-imperialist struggles of the past, than even the fiction of the fundamental rights and guarantees is thrown out of that very Constitution and the freedom of person, the press, speech and assembly, which the masses wanted to use to shake up this anti-democratic Government, are subjected to the rule of the police baton and the bureaucrats. Even a liberal would now feel ashamed to maintain, let alone the Communist Party and other democrats and revolutionaries, that this Government and the classes that keep it in power will ever allow us to carry out a fundamental democratic transformation in the country by parliamentary methods alone. Hence, the road that will lead us to freedom and peace, land and bread, as outlined in the Programme of the Party, has to be found elsewhere.

"... *It is the reactionary ruling classes who resort to force and violence against the people and who pose for us the question whether our creed is violence or non-violence.* Such a poser is a poser of Gandhian ideology which in practice misleads the masses and is a poser which we must steer clear of. Marxism and history have once for all decided the question for the Party and the people of every country in the world long ago. All action of the masses in defence of their interests to achieve their liberation is sacrosanct. *History sanctions all that the people decide to do, to clear the lumberwood of decadence and reaction in their path to progress and freedom (Emphasis added).*

"After the Second Party Congress, differences and controversies arose inside the Party about the path that the Indian revolutionary movement must adopt. For a time it was advocated, that the main weapon in our struggle would be the weapon of general strike of industrial workers followed by countrywide insurrection, as in Russia. Later, on the basis of a wrong understanding of the lessons of the Chinese Revolution, the thesis was put forward that since ours is a semi-colonial country



like China, our revolution would develop in the same way as in China, with partisan war of the peasantry as its main weapon.

"After long discussion, running into several months, the Party has now arrived at a new understanding of the correct path for attaining the freedom of the country and the happiness of the people, a path which we do not and cannot name as either Russian or Chinese. It should be, and is, one that conforms to the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, and that utilises the lessons given by all the struggles of history, especially the Russian and the Chinese; the Russian because it was the first socialist revolution in the world carried out by the working class under the leadership of the Communist Party of Lenin and Stalin in a capitalist and imperialist country; and the Chinese because it was the first people's democratic revolution in a semi-colonial, dependent country, under the leadership of the Communist Party, in which even the national bourgeoisie took part. At the same time, one has to remember that every country has its own peculiarities, natural and social, which cannot fail to govern its path to liberation" (Emphasis added).

India's path cannot be the Russian path: since India has essentially an agrarian and backward economy, the immense importance of peasant struggles should not be minimised. Therefore, the political general strike in the cities and in industrial areas is not the main weapon of our revolution and such a general strike alone will not be enough to unleash countrywide insurrection leading to the overthrow of the present state.

India's path cannot be, as had been argued by some, the Chinese path, that of partisan war leading to the establishment of liberation areas and ultimately to the liberation of cities, exactly in the way it happened in China. Therefore, the peasant partisan war would not be the main weapon to ensure the victory of the revolution.

*"It will be neither only the Russian nor the Chinese path but a path of Leninism applied to the Indian conditions"* (Emphasis added).

### *Differences in the Situation in China and India*

In China, the Communist Party had an army of 30,000 to begin with, in 1927 itself. In India, this did not exist.

"China had no unified and good communications system, which prevented the enemy from carrying out concentrated and swift attacks on the liberation forces. India is different in this respect from China in that it has a comparatively more unified, well-organised and far-flung system of communications. So the Indian ruling classes could easily and swiftly concentrate big forces against guerrilla areas and bases."

India had also a more centralised administration. Capitalism in India had developed far more than in China at the comparable stage of the revolution. India was under a single imperialism while in China different imperialist powers had different spheres of influence, and different warlords were at loggerheads with each other and could not combine forces and concentrate against the revolutionary bases.

"India has a far bigger working class than China had during her march to freedom and it has a role to play which can be decisive in our struggle.

"The Chinese Red Army was surrounded and threatened with annihilation again and again until it reached Manchuria. There, with the industrial base in hand and the great friendly Soviet Union in the rear, the Chinese liberation army, free from the possibility of any attack in the rear, rebuilt itself and launched the final offensive which led it to victory. The geographical situation in India in this respect is altogether different.

"This does not mean that there is nothing in common between us and China excepting the stage of our revolution and its main tasks. On the contrary, like China, India is of vast expanses. Like China, India has a vast peasant population. Our revolution, therefore, will have many features in common with the Chinese revolution. But peasant struggles along the Chinese path alone cannot lead to victory in India.

"Moreover, we must bear in mind that the Chinese Party stuck to the peasant partisan war alone, not out of a principle but out of sheer necessity. . . . Because it happened so with China, why make their necessity into a binding principle for us, and fail to bring the working class into a practical leadership and action in our liberation struggle?"

For the victory of the Indian revolution partisan warfare of the peasants has to be combined with the other major weapon, the strikes of the working class, the general strike and uprisings in the cities led by detachments of the working class. *The two basic factors of the revolution are the partisan war of the peasants and the uprising of the workers in the cities.*

### *Leading Role of the Working Class and the Worker-Peasant Alliance*

"While the previous line of reliance on the general strike in the cities neglected the role of the peasantry, the subsequent one of partisan struggle minimised the role of the working class (whom the peasants consider as their closest friend and ally), which in practice meant depriving the peasantry of its friend and leader. Both lines in practice meant ignoring the task of building the alliance of the working class and the peasantry, as the basis of the united national front, and therefore ignoring the task of building the united national front and ignoring the task of putting the working class at the head of this front in the liberation struggle.

"... *The leadership of the working class is not realised only through the Party and its leadership of the peasant struggle but actually, in deeds, through the working class boldly championing the demands of the peasantry and coming to the assistance of the peasant struggles through its own action.* The alliance must function in deed and fact, and not only in theory. The working class is the friend in action that must help the fighting peasants and must ensure victory over the common enemy (Emphasis added).

"The working class, relying on agricultural workers and poor pea-

sants, in firm alliance with the peasantry, together with the whole people, leads the battles in towns and rural areas to liberation, to land and bread, to work and peace."

The working class can achieve its leading role through direct actions, not only for its demands but also for the demands of all exploited sections and classes, especially the peasantry, and by acting as the foremost champion of the general democratic movement. The Party has to win over the majority of the workers in vital industries and build a powerful movement and organisation, based on shop committees.

"The Party has to build the unity of the working class and make it conscious of its tasks in relation to our entire people. The existing split in the working class movement which hampers the development of working class struggles must be overcome at all costs, in the shortest possible time, and united mass organisations of the working class built.

"The class has also to be made politically conscious. Only a united and politically conscious working class can fulfil the role of the leadership of the people.

"We have to rouse all sections of the peasantry including the rich peasantry for the struggle for agrarian reform and in the course of this struggle rebuild the mass peasant organisations, basing ourselves firmly on the agricultural workers and poor peasants who together constitute the majority of our agrarian population."

A network of peasant and agricultural worker organisations are to be built in the villages, to lead and guide their struggles. Volunteer squads of the most militant and conscious elements among them have to be formed to defend the movement against the attacks of the enemy and these may develop into partisan squads as the movement develops on to higher levels.

"It must be understood that because of the vast expanse of our country, because of the uneven development of the agrarian crisis and of the working class and peasant movement, and the uneven state of organisation and consciousness of the peasant masses and the influence of the Party, the peasant movement will not develop at the same tempo everywhere, and different forms of organisation and struggle will have to be adopted, depending on the maturity of the crisis, the degree of unification of the peasant masses and their mood, the strength and influence of the Party, and other factors.

"All these tasks call for *the most intense, patient and daily work among the masses, continuous agitation on our basic programme and the immediate demands of the people, a concrete working out of such demands for every section of the people according to general and local conditions, practical leadership of mass struggles, a combination of various forms of struggles, and a systematic building up of a network of mass organisations* (Emphasis added.)

"Above all, it is necessary to build up through patient struggle a Communist Party equipped with the theory of Marxism-Leninism, a party mastering strategy and tactics, a party practising self-criticism and strict discipline and which

*is closely linked with the masses* (Emphasis added.)

"The mass organisation and the Party that are built up must be able to withstand the fire of repression to which the Government continually subjects them and the people's movement." While recruiting the best elements from the working class and other toiling classes into the Party, it is necessary at the same time to exercise utmost vigilance against the swamping of the Party by elements that are not fully tested and trustworthy.

### *Assessment of the Immediate Situation and Tasks*

Hundreds of thousands of people were coming out in actions for their day-to-day demands, for food and adequate wages, for agrarian reforms and fair prices for agricultural produce, and so on. However, they still believed that the Government could be replaced by a real popular Government through general elections.

"It would be gross exaggeration to say that the country is already on the eve of armed insurrection or revolution, or that civil war is already raging in the country. If we were to read the situation so wrongly, it would lead us into adventurism and giving slogans to the masses out of keeping with the degree of their understanding and consciousness, and their preparedness, and the Government's isolation. Such slogans would isolate us from the people and hand over the masses to reformist disruptors.

"Equally wrong are they who see only the disunity of the popular forces, only the offensive of reaction, and advocate a policy of retreat in the name of regrouping of forces, of eschewing all militant actions on the plea that this will invite repression. Tactics based on such an understanding of the situation will lead to betrayal of the masses and surrender before the enemy.

"We have to lead the struggle of the people in the context of a sober evaluation of the situation. While it should not lead us into adventurism, we must also not forget that the crisis is not being solved but is growing. Hence, we cannot take a leisurely attitude and behave as if no deep crisis is moving the people and furious struggles are not looming ahead. Because insurrection and civil war do not exist, some would like to move and work as if they are living in a democracy with rights and liberties and nothing need be done to protect the Party and the leadership of mass organisations from onslaughts of the law run mad. With such an outlook, we shall get smashed and will be able to build nothing."

The Party had to lead the masses in their day-to-day struggles and take them forward step by step, so that the people through their own experience come to realise the necessity for revolutionary action.

The Party must not preach the inevitability of fascism but utilise the enormous volume of democratic opinion in the country to unite the people to halt the growing drive towards fascism on the part of the present Government. Through patient, systematic day-to-day work, through

the bold championing of the demands of the people, through correct leadership of the concrete struggle of all sections of the people, the Party would grow and be able to fulfil its role as organiser and leader of the people's democratic movement.

"We have to realise that although the masses are getting fast radicalised and moving into action in many parts of the country, the growth of the mass movement has not kept pace with the growth of discontent against the present Government and its policies and methods. To ascribe this to repression alone would be wrong. *This weakness of the mass movement is due, above all, to the weakness of our Party and the division in the camp of the progressive forces.* The Party must strive to overcome this division and must stress the supreme need for unity in action and itself grow into a mass Party, by drawing into its fold the best elements from the fighting masses (Emphasis added).

"We must fight the parliamentary elections and elections in every sphere where the broad strata of the people can be mobilised and their interests defended. We must be wherever the masses are and would like us to be."

Such was the assessment contained in the important document, *Statement of Policy*. It must be noted that certain parts of the tactical document, including some questions and answers during the discussions between our Party delegation and the Commission of the Central Committee of the CPSU, were not included in the *Statement of Policy*. We summarise the omitted portions—portions dealing with explanations and questions and answers—to give the reader a fuller idea of the discussions and decisions that emerged in the background of a grave inner-Party crisis centering on the issues of the Indian revolution, its specific path, the role of different classes and the forms of struggle, issues thrown up during the Telangana armed struggle during the years 1948-50.<sup>1</sup>

### *Partisan Struggle: A Marxist-Leninist Understanding*

As the crisis matures, as the unity, consciousness and organisation of the masses grow, as the strength and influence of the Party develop and as the enemy resorts to more and more ruthless measures to crush the agrarian movement, the question of when, where and how to resort to arms will be more and more forced on to the agenda. As the question is one of immense practical importance, it is absolutely necessary that the Party is able to give a clear and unambiguous answer to it.

It must be realised that the peasant movement cannot develop at the same tempo everywhere. Premature uprisings and adventurist actions of every type must be undoubtedly eschewed. At the same time, it would be wrong to lay down that armed defensive action in the form of partisan warfare should be resorted to in every specific area only when the movement in all parts of the country rises to the level of uprisings. On the contrary, in the course of the development of the movement, the situation may arise in several areas which would demand armed struggle

in the form of partisan warfare. For example, in a big and topographically suitable area where the peasant movement has risen to the level of seizure of land and foodgrains, the question as to how to effect that seizure and how to defend the land so seized will become a burning question. The Party is of the opinion that partisan warfare in such a situation, undertaken on the basis of a genuine mass peasant movement and the firm unity under the leadership of the Party of the peasant masses, especially the most oppressed and exploited strata, combined with other forms of struggle such as social boycott of landlords, mass no-rent struggle, agricultural workers' strike, can, if correctly organised and led, have a rousing and galvanising effect on the peasant masses in many other areas, and raise their own struggles to a higher level.

Wherever such partisan struggles develop, they must also be combined with mass actions of the working class, especially in the neighbouring areas, in the form of strikes and demonstrations. Undertaken on the basis of the most careful preparation and assessment of all factors, the partisan struggles must be conducted with utmost boldness and tenacity, defending the gains of the movement by every means at our disposal.

At the same time, the Party has to act with the utmost flexibility when overwhelming forces of the enemy are concentrated against the partisan areas and the partisan forces run into danger of defeat and total annihilation.

### *Partisan Struggle as Part of the Liberation Struggle*

Partisan areas will inevitably arise in various parts of the country as the crisis deepens and as the mass peasant movement rises to the level of revolutionary seizure of land and foodgrains, paralysing and wiping out the local forces oppressing them. However, they will continuously face the danger of encirclement and annihilation at the hands of the enemy. Even the coming into existence of liberated territories with their own armed forces in several parts of the country will not eliminate this danger because these areas will themselves be surrounded by hostile forces from all sides. Therefore, partisan war alone, no matter how widely extended, cannot ensure victory over the enemy in the concrete situation prevailing in India.

When the maturing crisis gives rise to partisan struggles on a wide scale, when the partisan forces in several areas are battling against the enemy, the workers in the cities, in the vital industries and especially in the transport system will have to play a decisive role. The onslaught of the enemy against the partisan forces, against liberated areas, will have to be hampered and paralysed by mass strike actions of the working class. *With hundreds of streams of partisan struggles merging with the general strike and uprising of workers in the cities, the enemy will find it impossible to concentrate his forces anywhere and defeat the revolutionary forces, but will himself face defeat and annihilation. Even inside the armed forces of the Government, the crisis will grow and big sections will join the forces of revolution* (Emphasis

added).

### *Partisan Struggle and Individual Terrorism*

In spite of the offensive nature of the partisan struggle, it is necessary to emphasise in our agitation and propaganda in the initial period the defensive nature of partisan struggle, saying that the objective of the partisan struggle is above all to defend the peasants from the attacks of the Government and its punitive organs. In doing so, special attention should be paid to the demands for which the peasants are fighting and to the atrocities of the Government which force the peasants to take to arms. It is necessary, at the same time, to point out that it is the Government that is responsible for the violence and bloodshed.

Partisan struggle is frequently confused with individual terrorism. *Individual terrorism contradicts the spirit and objective of partisan struggle. And it is absolutely incompatible with partisan struggle.* In the first place, the objective of individual terrorism is to destroy particular individuals while not pursuing the aim of destroying the regime of feudal exploitation and subjugation of the people, whereas the objective of partisan struggle is not to destroy particular individuals but to destroy the hated regime, in a prolonged struggle of the popular masses. In the second place, individual terrorism is carried out by individual terrorists or by a small squad of terrorists, acting apart from the masses and without any link with the struggle of the masses, whereas the partisan struggle is carried on in close contact with the struggle of the masses against the existing regime. *Individual terrorism undermines the possibility of unleashing the partisan struggle of the masses and it should be rejected as harmful and dangerous* (Emphasis added).

### *Some Questions to the CPSU Commission Headed by Stalin*

Q Is it correct to resort to partisan war in one particular area where the conditions are ripe for it, even though other rural areas are not ripe for it, and the workers are not ready to support it with mass actions?

A Yes, you can and should resort to it. To start or not, does not depend on us. It depends on the organisational state of the masses and their mood. If the masses are ready, you must start it.

Q Have we to take up partisan struggle only when the peasant struggle for partial demands reaches the stage of land distribution and establishing of village peasant committees? Or can we take it up when the movement is still in the stage of struggle for partial demands, for example, rent reduction?

A The partisan struggle also has stages. It starts with smaller demands—let us say, reduction of rent. It is not yet a partisan struggle. If the enemy refuses to grant the demands and the peasant is eager to win it by force, then partisan struggles can start. True, it is not the struggle for seizure of land but only for a reduction of

rent, still it will be partisan struggle.

Hence, it does not depend on us. If the masses are ready and eager, we should assist them.

Q Can partisan warfare even of the most elementary type be developed in areas where communications are well-developed?

A Yes, when encirclement occurs, transfer the best forces to another area. Lead out the armed forces so as to join it with the armed forces in another area, so as to create a liberation army of your own.

Q The aim of the partisan struggle must be liquidation of the enemy's armed forces with the active assistance of the masses of peasants. To kill individual oppressors with a view to terrorising all the other oppressors and making them renounce their oppression is terrorism. But I cannot understand the complete banning of any individual action against any oppressor landlord, notorious official or a spy, as a matter of principle, under the name of terrorism. In my opinion, at times, it becomes necessary in the earlier phase of the partisan struggle to organise individual actions against some notorious oppressors, not in order to terrorise other oppressors into renouncing their oppression but to guard the safety of the partisan squads. I am unable to understand how such actions make the people passive. As I understand international literature, such individual actions were conducted by partisans against German and Japanese fascists in the occupied countries during the anti-fascist war, and they are being done even now in Asian countries where partisan warfare is going on—Malaya, Burma, Indochina etc. If I remember rightly, such actions were not only not banned by Lenin in his article on partisan warfare but on the other hand, he severely criticised the Mensheviks who condemned them as anarchism. I seek clarification on this point.

A The comrade says he cannot understand why individual terrorism should slow down the action of the masses. Individual terrorism is called so not merely because it is directed against individual oppressors but also because it is carried out by individuals or groups irrespective of the masses. Individual terrorism creates the illusion that the main evil is not the regime but individuals; that only if a few more are destroyed, the regime will be finished off. What conclusions will the masses draw? That with the help of terrorism of this type, it is possible to destroy the regime after a long struggle. And if such conclusions are drawn by the peasants, they will say, "No use developing the struggle against the regime. Our glorious terrorists will do the job". Such sentiment weakens the onslaught of the masses against the regime. Therefore, it is harmful and dangerous.

Individual terrorism creates the belief that the main force lies in the heroic terrorists and not in the masses. The role of the masses becomes to watch and applaud. That means to cultivate passivity. Marx and Engels taught that the liberation of the masses has to be won by the masses themselves. That is what you ought to tell them. Different

results follow from individual terrorism. The masses look to the terrorists as heroes and liberators.

The comrade's reference to Lenin is without foundation. We can give him articles by Lenin directed against individual terrorism. You must know how hard Lenin hit the Mensheviks when the revolution was at an ebb and they took to terror.

*The theory of individual terrorism comes to the front when the revolution recedes. It is a reflection of the weakness of the movement.* Whenever the revolutionary movement is rising and the masses themselves rise, the theory of individual disappears from the horizon. The comrade must bear that in mind (Emphasis added).

### *Telangana Armed Struggle and Its Perspective*

The delegation of our Central Committee which had the benefit of these discussions with the leaders of the Central Committee of the CPSU and Comrade Stalin reported to our Central Committee the gist of its discussions regarding Telangana. *The Commission of the CPSU was appreciative of the Telangana armed partisan resistance*, which originally began as a peasant movement over certain partial economic demands and finally developed into an armed liberation struggle to overthrow the rule of the Nizam in Hyderabad State. This was to the credit of the Telangana peasantry and the Communist Party that gave leadership to this struggle.

*However, after the rule of the Nizam was overthrown by the Indian Union armies in September 1948 and the State of Hyderabad was merged in the Indian Union, it was sectarian and incorrect to continue it as a liberation struggle against the regime of the Indian Union, for establishing People's Democracy.* The correlation of class forces and the political situation obtaining at that time did not permit such a slogan as a slogan of immediate action.

*But it was absolutely correct to defend the gains of the Telangana peasantry through armed partisan struggle when those gains, land and other democratic liberties, were under attack by the Union Government and its armed forces. It would have been proper and correct to have conducted this armed partisan struggle as a partial struggle for the defence of the peasants' lands and mobilised the widest democratic support to such a just struggle, while expressing readiness to settle the land question of the Telangana peasantry through negotiations and discussions.* That would have strengthened the hands of the fighting people and partisans of Telangana while isolating the Indian Government that was unjustly attacking the peasants and supporting the feudal landlords. However, the Telangana armed partisan struggle, instead of being fought as a partial struggle for land, was wrongly directed as a liberation war against the Congress regime and hence did not succeed in securing wider support to isolate the attacking Indian Government and its armies.

It was also observed that in the prevailing situation, it was unfortunate that the Telangana armed partisan resistance could not be defended and continued. *The time had come to withdraw the armed partisan struggle*

and it was for the leadership of the Communist Party of India to decide on what terms to withdraw it and negotiate; how long it had to be continued to secure suitable terms; and when exactly the armed resistance must be withdrawn and so on. Undue prolongation of the Telangana armed partisan struggle in the absence of mass peasant upsurge in support of the partisan struggle might raise the danger of its deteriorating into squad or individual terrorism.

The May 1951 Central Committee meeting was convened to apprise the Committee of the discussions held by our delegation, and to take necessary political-organisational decisions. Rajeswar Rao and the Polit Bureau which was elected a year earlier had submitted their resignation on the grounds that their continuation was not congenial to the reunification of the Party in order to carry out the newly chalked out Party line. The Polit Bureau was reconstituted and Ajoy Kumar Ghosh was elected General Secretary of the Central Committee.

The May 1951 meeting of the CC, after a thorough discussion of the Telangana situation, adopted a resolution.<sup>2</sup> The meeting also decided to ask the CC members from Andhra to go to the areas of armed partisan struggle in Telangana in order to hold discussions with the squad leaders and organisers of the local committees and find out whether they were in a position to continue the partisan resistance until the Party was able to bargain for favourable terms from the Government for the withdrawal of the armed struggle. The CC was of the view that two basic conditions had to be fulfilled before the decision to withdraw could be taken : (a) The land that was in the possession of the peasants should not be taken away to be handed over to the landlords; (b) All warrants and cases against the leaders of the struggle should be withdrawn, all prisoners should be released and the ban on the Communist Party and the Andhra Mahasabha should be lifted.

It was very correct on the part of the CC to decide that on no serious mass struggle—especially one like the armed peasant struggle of Telangana—should final decisions be taken without proper consultations and discussions with the direct participants and leaders of the struggle. The CC members from Andhra had met separately to assess the situation anew before they went to the areas in Telangana to meet and discuss with the local partisan leaders. Though there were some differences among them initially in the matter of the further conduct of the Telangana struggle, they were able to overcome these differences and go unitedly before the Party ranks and the people.

The May 1951 CC meeting also countermanded the disciplinary action against Ravi Narayan Reddy : his expulsion from the Party for clandestine desertion from an underground shelter of the Party. It disapproved, however, of his action of desertion which endangered the safety of other comrades, and sharply criticised his document, *Naked Truth of Telangana*, which slandered the Telangana armed struggle after September 1948, and its circulation. Ravi Narayan Reddy took his Party membership according to the decision of the CC, but continued

his anti-Telangana propaganda contrary to the decisions and directives of the CC.

The May 1951 CC resolution and the change of central leadership of the Party was taken by the Ravi Narayan Reddy section in Telangana and by the Party Headquarters Open Forum section, which functioned on an all-India scale, as the green signal for a full-fledged campaign for the total and unconditional withdrawal of the Telangana struggle and for eliminating the fighting cadre from the leadership at all levels. They started a campaign that the CC had already withdrawn the struggle; that only the Andhra leaders or the 'Bezwada clique' were persisting in carrying on the struggle; and that the struggle was nothing more than individual terrorism and anarchist deeds.

The Party Headquarters Open Forum and the group formed by Ravi Narayan Reddy to slander the Telangana armed struggle after the entry of the Indian Army had been systematically carrying on the propaganda that both the all-India leadership and the Andhra leadership had adopted this terroristic method of revolution, guerrilla struggle with small squads, at the instance of the Yugoslav delegation that attended the Second Congress of the CPI in February 1941. O P Sangal, a follower of P C Joshi then, was the propagator of this slander, as dirty a slander as the one put out by the Government of India that the Communists had joined hands with the Razakars. For the enemies of the revolutionary struggle, any stick is good enough to beat Communists with.

In Telangana itself, the Hyderabad City group; the Ravi Narayan Reddy group and some of the Telangana leaders released from jail held a conference, formed a preparatory Committee, announced the withdrawal of the Telangana struggle and decided to participate in the coming elections.

The Polit Bureau under pressure from the mounting all-India campaign of these groups announced a negotiating committee with the Government for the withdrawal of the struggle. The All India Kisan Sabha called for the withdrawal of the struggle. Ajoy Kumar Ghosh threatened that unless the Telangana struggle was withdrawn immediately, he would be forced to issue a statement disowning it; a counter-threat by Maddukuri Chandrasekhara Rao, the Secretary of the Andhra Committee, that in that case the leaders of the Telangana movement would be forced to disown him and his leadership kept him in check.

The leaders of the Telangana movement trekked long distances into the forest areas to explain the new understanding and to sound out the squads whether they would be able to continue till the minimum guarantee for the Telangana fighters' safety and the guarantee of land that was still in the hands of the peasants could be extracted from the Government. Some of them could return only by September-end.

Meanwhile, more arrests had taken place in Hyderabad City and more of the underground shelters had been blown up. Many of the leaders in jail started saying openly that they were for the immediate

and unconditional withdrawal of the struggle. They were released after such declarations and joined vociferously in the campaign for withdrawal.

The Government of India told the negotiating committee and the intermediaries that there was no use of these declarations unless the fighting committee headed by the 'Bezawada clique' announced withdrawal. The hunt for the guerrilla squads was pursued relentlessly. Meanwhile, the Karimnagar-Adilabad area committee and the Palvancha area committee also called for withdrawal.

Another important factor to be noted was that with the general elections approaching, the Congress and the 'legal People's Democratic Front' cadre had gone to the Telangana villages and started their campaign. They spread the word that if our guerrillas gave up their actions in Telangana, the police camps would be removed and our squads and leaders allowed to come back to the villages and be allowed to participate in the elections. It was suggested that by allowing these people to vote, it was possible to defeat the Congress and that the constant raids and beatings would end.

In the Andhra areas, the cadres were released from the jails as early as June-July. They began preparing for the elections. Comrade A K Gopalan toured the villages denouncing the police repression and demanding the withdrawal of the arrest warrants against the leaders. Red flags started fluttering in hundreds of villages. In this situation, the Andhra Provincial Committee which led the Telangana struggle allowed the cadre to participate in the elections. Members and squad leaders from Andhra who had been fighting in the forest region of Krishna along with the Telangana guerrilla squads left the areas and went back to Andhra to participate in the elections.

The leadership of the Telangana armed struggle then consisted of Rajeswar Rao, Basavapunnaiah, Maddukuri Chandrasekhara Rao, Sundarayya, Devulapali Venkateswara Rao and Bheemireddi Narasimha Reddi. Venkateswara Rao after attending the CC meeting accepted the new understanding and went to the Godavari forest area in June 1951 to meet the guerrillas and explain to them the new understanding and the decision of the new CC. Narasimha Reddi had gone to the same forest region in March 1951. I had gone to the Amaraabad forest region and returned.

On October 20, the four comrades other than those who had gone to meet the guerrillas met and debated anxiously and for long. They came to the conclusion that under these conditions there was no possibility of getting even the minimum terms and that any further continuation would put the fighting cadre and squads into greater danger. It was better to withdraw unconditionally, taking the Government at its word that amnesty for cadre and assurance of land for the peasant would come after the withdrawal.

### *Considerations that Led to the Decision*

Even during the CC discussions in May 1951 the CC members who were in the leadership of the Telangana movement had agreed, in spite of initial differences expressed by some, that the Telangana armed struggle even as partial partisan struggle in defence of land could not be continued for long and should be withdrawn after getting the most favourable terms possible.

First and foremost was the consideration that in the bastions of the Telangana movement—in Nalgonda, in Khammam and in Warangal districts, in all the areas of the plains—the mass participation had declined, although the sympathies of the masses were with the fighting guerrillas. Party and Andhra Mahasabha organisers and guerrilla squads were forced to leave those areas and retreat to the distant forest areas. Raids from the forest bases by the guerrilla squads and the help they received from the people in their actions against landlords and enemy agents prevented the landlords and the Government from stabilising their rule and restoring the 'normal' situation of landlord exploitation. But these could not overcome the failure of the masses not participating, or participating less, in actual struggles. Compared with the mass participation during 1947-48 against the Nizam and his Razakars and even for a period following the intervention by the Indian Army, or compared with the first spontaneous mass upsurge and response in the newly extended areas in late 1949 and early 1950, the declining mass participation in this period stands out.

The second consideration was that the guerrilla squads faced with an increasing network of military and police camps and with declining mass participation had become less and less effective in their actions on the enemy's armed personnel, the military, the police and the armed Home-Guards. Squad actions were being directed more and more against individual enemy agents and individual landlords. The danger of the movement deteriorating into individual terrorism if the armed struggle were continued was quite evident. If the main action is not against the armed forces of the ruling classes but against individual landlords and their agents, one of the essential features of the partial partisan guerrilla movement is lost. The firepower of the guerrillas and their military skill in relation to the armed forces of the ruling classes had not increased in quantity and effectiveness, but had become weaker.

Thirdly, while the peasants held possession of the greater portion of *anyakrantalu* or leased land and practically the whole of the wasteland brought under cultivation, they had lost possession of most of the surplus lands seized. Even on the lands in their possession they were forced to pay rent, although in many cases this was small or nominal. The lands could not be recovered, or even continue to be defended, by armed defence much longer.

Fourthly, the ruling classes had strengthened their position in the whole country, having overcome the enormous initial difficulties they

bad faced immediately after the transfer of power. The high tide of the post-war mass upsurge had been ebbing rapidly. There were no important solidarity actions and aid campaigns in defence of the Telangana struggle in the rest of the country.

Fifthly, in the difficult situation facing the Telangana movement and in the face of the unimaginable military and police torture and terror, sharp differences had come up once again in the leadership over the future conduct of the movement. The most notorious example of this had been Ravi Narayan Reddy's stealthy desertion of his underground shelter and his joining the Open Forum at Bombay in its public slander campaign against the Telangana movement. The whole political and tactical line pursued by the new Polit Bureau was under attack by the Ajoy-Dange-Ghate leadership in Bombay, the legal Party Headquarters.

Sixthly, in the fighting areas, among the guerrilla leaders themselves, differences began to accumulate. Desertions began even among the squad and centre organisers. This took a serious turn when a small group headed by Dayam Rajireddi in the Manukota-Illendu area tried to organise a revolt. After failure, he and a few others deserted to the enemy.

Finally, with the clear understanding obtained about the need to distinguish between partial partisan struggles and partisan warfare as part of the liberation struggle, it had become easier for the leaders of the Telangana movement to decide on the tactics in relation to Telangana. We had carried on the armed defence to breaking point.

These were the considerations that made the CC members heading the Telangana movement agree with the CC resolution of May 1951. Our hope and ardent desire was that the entire Party would unitedly defend and stand by the Telangana struggle and try to get those minimum terms which would enable the withdrawal of the armed struggle, while maintaining the maximum gains possible at that time and in that situation. The development of events after the CC resolution dashed whatever prospect there was for achieving this. Hence the decision for unconditional withdrawal.<sup>3</sup>

*The decision to withdraw the Telangana armed struggle was released to the public and the press and was broadcast by the radio in October 21, 1951.*

### *After the Withdrawal*

I went to the Amarabad forest regions once again and attended the Conference of Party and guerrilla fighters held there in the third week of November. I explained the decision of withdrawal and the future programme. The Conference passed a resolution on martyrs and greeted the Soviet Union. After that, it passed resolutions approving the decision of withdrawal of the struggle; on the protection of cadre; on the land question; on grain levies; on food; on agricultural labour problems; on the peace movement; on the forthcoming elections; and on the organi-

sation of the People's Democratic Front and the Party.

Rajeswar Rao and Devulapalli Venkateswara Rao went to the Warangal-Khammam forest areas and explained the decision.

The underground Party leadership announced a reconstituted committee for Telangana of about 25 members, consisting of the underground cadre as well as those who were released and those who were in jail; and a small executive committee for taking day-to-day decisions regarding the elections and for taking all necessary steps to safeguard the cadre and the movement after withdrawal. The legal comrades refused to cooperate.

Ajoy Kumar Ghosh, without consulting the underground state leadership, constituted an 'Election Committee' and authorised it to function as the *de facto* State Committee. The underground Committee sent a circular asking Party members to ignore this committee except for election purposes, and continued to guide the underground cadre; the 'Election Committee' was able to get acceptance and cooperation from the open cadre. The underground cadre worked hard for the success of the People's Democratic Front candidates. The Communist Party could not set up candidates in its own name since the ban on it had not yet been withdrawn.

The landlords had not yet returned to the villages and could not establish their authority; the people were free to vote. They voted PDF candidates with thumping majorities and the Congress lost many deposits. In the Nalgonda, Khammam, Warangal and Karimnagar districts, the PDF won all seats except four. In the whole of Telangana, 40 PDF and 10 Socialist and Scheduled Castes' Federation candidates supported by the PDF won, out of a total of 100 candidates. Well-known Congress leaders were defeated. Seven out of 14 Lok Sabha seats were won by the PDF candidates.

These successes in the elections in Telangana and a similar, though less spectacular, electoral success in the Andhra area proved the utter baselessness of the campaign that the Party had ruined the whole mass movement and was isolated from the people because of its 'sectarianism' and because of 'anarchist' and 'individual terroristic' movement. In fact, out of 29 members of the Communist Parliamentary Group, 19 were from Andhra Pradesh.

About 25 leading and important comrades of Telangana from the fighting areas as well as those who were in the open held a prolonged meeting for a week, in February 1952, and discussed the problems that divided the cadre. Ajoy Kumar Ghosh as General Secretary of the Party attended the meeting and summed up the agreed conclusions. A united Telangana Committee was formed to lead the Telangana movement. I was the Secretary, and Basavapunniah, Ravi Narayan Reddy, Baddam Yellareddi, Maqdoom, Devulapalli Venkateswar Rao and Bhimireddi Narasimha Reddi were the other members of the Secretariat. Our anxiety for unity was so great that we accepted the 'principle' that if differences persisted on any issue, decisions were to be taken by a two

thirds majority !

During 1952, after the elections were held, most of the leading cadre came out in the open. The hunt for underground squads and cadre continued. The police killed a few of our cadre; arrests and prosecutions continued; and heavy sentences were given. Asked about its promise of withdrawing cases and warrants and of releasing the arrested and convicted comrades, the Government put up the argument that the guerrillas had not surrendered arms.

The Telangana Committee met and decided unanimously to surrender the arms, since the arms did not serve any purpose then and only provided the Government an excuse to pursue its vendetta. In future, if once again the people had to take up arms, it would be quite easy to gather them as in the past, without relying on these outmoded firearms. The Party handed over the arms at specified places. Devulapalli Venkateswar Rao was a willing party to this decision to surrender arms. But in 1969, when he had become a full-fledged Naxalite leader, he condemned the withdrawal of the struggle and the surrender of arms as the greatest betrayal. According to him, if only the arms had not been surrendered even when the Telangana struggle had been withdrawn, the course of events would have been different.

The Chinese Party comrades at no time between 1951 and 1967 said that the withdrawal of the Telangana movement was wrong, although they could have conveyed this to us on innumerable occasions when we had the opportunity to meet them personally. When we once stated, in a mood of self-criticism, that if we had had the correct understanding we could have retreated with much fewer losses and with greater gains, they told us not to stress this aspect, but to bring forth the revolutionary significance of the fact that the Nehru Government could not suppress a peasant partisan struggle even in a small part of the country.

### *Persistence of the Differences*

1) Though Ajoy Kumar Ghosh concluded that the continuation of the armed struggle to defend the possession of the lands of the peasantry after the intervention by the Indian Army was correct, and that not to have continued it would have been betrayal of the peasantry, Ravi Narayan Reddy's group refused to accept this position. They carried on their own propaganda that it was wrong to have continued the armed struggle.

2) They opposed the formation of the Visalandhra Committee as the leading Committee of both the Andhra and the Telangana regions, with each region having a separate regional committee subordinate to it. They insisted that both these should be directly led by the CC and that the Visalandhra Committee could only be a forum to exchange opinions on common issues.

3) They opposed developing the Andhra Mahasabha as the united front of all the democratic forces in Telangana. They wanted the PDF

to be such an organisation for the whole of Hyderabad State. In fact, they wanted to develop the PDF as the Party while relegating the building of the Communist Party to the background. They wanted every mass activity to be undertaken on behalf of the PDF.

4) They were opposed to forming Party committees at various levels with the underground cadre occupying their due place. They dubbed these underground cadre 'sectarian' and 'armed struggle-wallahs', who were to be eliminated for the ostensible reason that meetings of underground and open cadre were difficult to organise. They did not help in the rehabilitation of the underground cadre or in their functioning.

5) They did not grasp the disruptive character of the Mulki movement; much less did they fight it vigorously. The Mulki movement was roused in 1952 by the reactionaries in Telangana, landlords, reactionary Government officials and Marwari businessmen who, in the name of fighting the domination of outsiders, were out to disrupt the democratic movement.

6) They started to seek compromises with the landlords to settle disputes—many against the interests of the peasants—instead of boldly leading militant resistance against the efforts of the landlords to evict the peasants from the lands they were in possession of and were cultivating.<sup>4</sup>

Ultimately, seeing that the Andhra Committee leadership, with Rajeswar Rao as Secretary, was not prepared to fight these disruptive policies; that the Central Committee, although politically upholding the viewpoint of the fighting underground cadre, was not prepared to enforce or even give its decisions in writing; and that the Telangana and Andhra Committees started functioning separately, Comrade Basava-punnaiiah and I went back to the Andhra area. It was only after 1956, when Andhra Pradesh was formed, that a united Party Committee came into existence.

### *Epilogue*

It is now 30 years since the Communists became a political force in the Andhra Mahasabha of Telangana and took the leadership of the anti-landlord and anti-Nizam struggle. It is now more than 25 years since the mass of the peasantry took up arms to safeguard the lands they were cultivating and to resist the armed attacks of the landlords and the armed forces of the Nizam, and subsequently the armed forces of the Indian Government. It is now over 20 years since that heroic partisan struggle was withdrawn.

As we write the history of the Telangana people's struggle and its lessons after two decades, it is necessary to take note of the position of the people's movement in that area in 1972. What is the position of the Communist Party and where are the principal participants and the leaders of the movement now? Were the tactics adopted after the withdrawal of the struggle all that they should have been? Could there have

been alternative measures? What else could we have done, to be in a better position than we are today? What are the main lessons to be drawn for the development of the revolutionary movement today?

These are some of the questions which came before us. Let me sum up my impressions in relation to these questions.

Even now, after the continuous and murderous attacks for over 20 years by the landlords who returned with the help of the guns and bayonets of the Congress Government and who carry on these attacks with the help of the same Congress Government of theirs, the Telangana peasant movement is quite vigorous in about 300 villages. Here the Communist Party of India (Marxist) holds a dominant and leading position, compared with 3000 villages at the height of the Telangana movement. The CPI (M) is a powerful force in five talukas in Nalgonda district and in another five talukas in the Warangal and Khammam districts. Our movement could not strike deep roots in all the extended areas in these and in other districts and was suppressed. The Right Communists, too, hold sizable influence in the talukas of Devarakonda, Narsapur, Adilabad, Sircilla and Warangal, each in a separate district.

In all these areas as well as in the whole of Telangana, if the masses enjoy the fruits of that struggle, it is because of their heroic and persistent resistance to the brutal repression by the landlords and the Congress regime, and not at all because of the benign rule of the Congress. The most shattering blow to the movement in its old areas has come in Manukota taluka, where we find the cruellest and most systematic attack by the landlords—the old powerful *deshmukhs* who now wear the Congress mantle—on the peasant movement. We are unable to counter these terror tactics of the landlords. Quite a number of active cadre, after being repeatedly beaten up and robbed of their possessions, were forced to make peace with the landlords. Some of them even joined the landlords actively to fight the Party and the people. The dangling of carrots by the landlords, the offer of positions in panchayats and certain concessions to certain sections of the people with a view to winning them over also disrupted the movement to a certain extent.

Similar attempts to suppress and liquidate the people's movement and the Communist Party in other strongholds have been made all through the two decades. During the last five years, these attempts have been intensified in the Huzurnagar-Suryapet area, the Khammam-Madhira area and the Narsampet-Mulugu area. Thousands, including leaders of the Party and ordinary peasants, were implicated in some criminal case or the other. Goonda attacks were organised on Party members and their houses with the active help of police, through corrupt police officers specially posted to do the dirty work. Our Party units and the toiling masses are fighting back against heavy odds and are defending the movement doggedly.

It is necessary, of course, to note the changing socio-economic structure in the areas of the old Telangana peasant movement and the conse-

quent changing correlation of forces in the countryside.

The landlords who ran away or were driven out of the villages during the movement came back and reconsolidated their positions in the rural areas. They seized back most of their 'seri' lands. They sold most of the *anyakrantalu* and lands with the old tenants to rich cultivators and some protected tenants, who got the right of first purchase under the land laws enacted in 1950 and later under the impact of the Telangana peasant movement. The drive to deprive the peasants and agricultural labourers of the wastelands they have been cultivating goes on, along with bitter struggles for *patta* rights for this land. The land ceiling acts are only on paper. No land over the so-called ceiling has been taken over and distributed.

The landlords do not own or command thousands of acres in their own names; they do not lease it on the same old scale; they do not adopt the old methods of utter feudal exploitation and loot. They have redistributed the land among their own relatives, apart from what was sold, and have taken to 'self-cultivation' by modern agricultural methods by employing wage labour. Feudal forms of exploitation, rack-renting, usury and low wages and some kinds of indirect forced labour are also important features of the present rural situation.

These landlords have been buttressed by the growth of the new rich strata in the rural areas : the capitalist farmers; the capitalist landlords, who do not do manual labour in their fields but get them cultivated by wage labour, at the most confining their task to supervision; and the rich peasants who, while contributing physical labour, depend more on wage labour and earn a regular surplus.

A considerable section of middle peasants has grown. The growth of the new rich and middle peasantry is especially linked with the growth of irrigation under small river projects, under the Nagarjunasagar canals and under wells with electric pumps.

The landlords have changed not merely their pattern of landownership and cultivation. They have changed their tactics of fighting the growing people's movement. Along with their methods of brutal terror and repression, they adopt tactics of dividing the ranks of the people. They promise land and actually give it to certain sections of the rural poor based on castes and communities, the grazing lands, the communal lands and the wastelands. They incite certain sections against other sections who are already cultivating the land and are under the influence of *kisan* or agricultural labour organisations of the Communist Party. They actively support toddy or *arrak* (liquor) contractors against ordinary toddy-tappers. They utilise the community projects, the cooperative societies, the loans for purchasing tractors, the electricity for wells, the fertilisers—to improve their hold over the middle and rich peasantry. They try to monopolise all the key administrative posts in the government departments. They resort to every foul means to dominate the village *panchayat*, the *panchayat samiti* and the *zilla parishad* and try to garner all

benefits. When these steps are not enough to dominate the villages, they resort to goonda terror backed by the police and administrative set-up.

For all these reasons, even in those 300 villages where our movement and Party hold a major position, a considerable section of the rural poor and a large proportion of the middle and rich peasantry are with the Congress.

It is necessary to analyse concretely this new correlation of class forces in the villages and to adopt concrete tactics to advance the movement by overcoming our weaknesses and defeating the enemy's plans. The agrarian movement today is not in such a strong position that it can take up as a practical issue land seizure or distribution of the lands of the landlords. The movement is forced to defend the possession, and the right to continue the cultivation, of wastelands; or to take up the minimum wage demand for agricultural labour, a demand which was advanced and enforced over two decades ago.

In urban centres and among the working class, where even during the period of the Telangana struggle the revolutionary movement and our Party were weak, they continue to be weak. In the Hyderabad industrial belt, in the Bellampalli-Sirpur belt, among Government and middle class employees, among teachers and shop employees, our organisation and movement continue to be weak. These sections are dominated mostly by the Congress and by various other political and sectional leaders.

The greatest failure during this whole period has been the failure to develop a strong democratic student movement, or to develop the necessary deep contacts with the educated younger generation, the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia.

It is not the revolutionary forces that are able to draw in these youth, the working class and the middle class employees, but the various reactionary forces. The recent 'Separate Telangana State' movement has been led by the very same landlords, reactionary and big business interests that opposed the Telangana peasant movement, the democratic aspirations of the people, the formation of linguistic states and the unity of nationalities on a democratic basis. The students and the Government and other middle class employees have been carried away by false assumptions and assurances. The great democratic movement that once forced the creation of linguistic states has been so weakened that in that very area a counter-slogan has come to the fore, backed and led by the reactionaries. Once again, it is in the strongholds of the Communist Party—in Nalgonda and Khammam—that the people have rallied to fight the separatist movement.

Why should this be? Could not the Party have done better? Is it inevitable that in area after area advance takes place in spurts and in isolation, gets crushed by the ruling classes and does not revive for a long time? Is there no possibility of the revolutionary democratic movement being coordinated and defended in the strong areas, till enough areas

join them and a mortal blow is struck at the state power of the ruling classes, and People's Democracy led by the working class is ushered in?

I have referred to the sharp differences that arose in the post-withdrawal period among our Party leaders in Telangana on the question of defending the land that was still in the possession of the Telangana peasantry. I have indicated how that section which had been opposing the armed defence of the land after the intervention by Nehru's Government resorted mainly to the seeking of compromises with the landlords, instead of mobilising the peasantry to get the maximum concessions even in that difficult position.

We did not adopt a militant line of defending the land. We did not keep the land question as the main focal issue before the agrarian masses and before the whole democratic movement. This could have been done only if the whole Party, not merely in Telangana but in the whole of India, had been armed with the correct perspective of the development of the revolutionary movement in India. This could have been done only if the Party had not adopted a constitutional, parliamentary line of development, investing great hope in the 'progressive' policies of the Nehru Government.

The Communist Party should have understood the extremely uneven development of the revolutionary democratic movement in the country; and the necessity of adopting suitable tactics of concentration and development of the movement all round and on all fronts in key and important areas (developing them first as genuine political bases). In other areas we should have been able to build very close links with other democratic forces and parties and mass organisations however vacillating, halting and (in many instances) retrograde they might be; and help them, slowly and step by step, to come to the correct line and develop the movement.

The Communist Party should have developed in such a way that whatever the repression or measures that the ruling classes and the state resorted to, the Party could be in a position to continue its multifarious activities on all key fronts and in all key areas. Amidst our constitutional illusions, we neglected this task.

One of the fateful decisions taken by our Party State Committee encouraged and endorsed by the Central leadership—was to take back into the Party all those persons (especially personages) who showed cowardice, who surrendered to the police, who even betrayed secrets of the Party and of the underground cadre and apparatus. The reason given for this was that as the policies pursued by the all India leaders were sectarian, these persons could not face the enemy terror, were therefore not guilty enough to be thrown out of the Party for good. It was significant that this decision was taken by a one-vote majority by the legal comrades who came out of jail before the underground comrades could come out into the open. This majority held the view that the Telangana armed struggle after the intervention by the Indian Army was wrong.

Lack of vigilance in admitting members into the Party persists. At

times we admit persons into the Party who show certain initiative and capacity, without looking seriously at their past.

All this shows that even in the leading cadre, ideological development and the application of theory to concrete realities are weak. This makes them unable to endure the lifelong patient work of revolution. It makes them unable to find their moorings under all situations and under the complex national and international situations that develop. Our failure to develop even our leading cadre ideologically and politically is one of the reasons for the ups and downs in the Communist movement in India.

In Telangana, as we look back over the past two decades, we have to reproach ourselves with not having been able to keep in touch with the tens of thousands of militants who suffered so greatly during the Telangana struggle, suffered innumerable physical tortures and indignities and long years of jail life. We failed to nurse their anger against Congress rule and to develop them into active fighters against the regime and its policies. They have not been drawn into the mass organisations at the village level and into active participation in their activities. At most, we have been able to draw in a very small section into such organisations and activity.

To accomplish all this, we needed a systematic Party organisation and structure from the village upwards, with each village branch or a branch for a group of villages functioning actively; a local committee capable of guiding a few tens of such branches; and a district committee capable of guiding these local committees. We did not develop such a Party organisational structure. We functioned more through general body meetings, public meetings and parliamentary and *panchayat* forums. We did not function on the basis of a real revolutionary party structure.

We ignored the education and the ideological development of Party members and cadre, not to mention the militants. If in spite of this failure a certain number of leading cadre and Party members developed and continue today to lead the movement, it is mainly because of their individual grit, capacity and experience derived from long period of trial and error and from their being in the thick of the movement. There was no conscious, organised efforts to educate them ideologically and to train them in all the practical tasks of the mass movement.

It is not difficult to see why, when any such leading cadre in any area becomes inactive or wobbles or leaves the Party under various pressures, the whole area along with a large number of Party members goes with him. The movement and the Party thus suffer a terrible loss, even a blackout in the area.

With the old generation (which was 18 to 35 years old in 1942) which participated in the Telangana struggle becoming old or passing away, two generations of new cadre should have developed to replace it. This has not happened sufficiently, even at the lower levels. Unless we draw new cadre into our Party, develop them and promote them to

positions of higher leadership quickly, the movement cannot develop appreciably.

We face acute problems of organisation, of ideological development, of defence of advanced movement, and of developing movements in other areas and states. We hope these experiences of Telangana will help in facing some of the tasks, provided we really try to draw the proper lessons and try to apply them to the concrete situation in these states.

( *Concluded* )

<sup>1</sup> For the text of the omitted portions, see pp 409-414, P Sundarayya, *Telangana People's Struggle and Its Lessons*, published by the Central Committee of the CPI (M), Calcutta, December 1972.

<sup>2</sup> For the text of the Central Committee resolution of May 1951 on Telangana, re-translated from the Telugu, see pp 417-420, *Ibid*. The text of the resolution shows how baseless and slanderous it is to say, as some papers and individuals do, that the CC in its May 1951 resolution denounced the Telangana people's movement as terroristic and anarchist.

<sup>3</sup> The resolutions passed at the Amarabad Regional Communists' and Guerrillas' Conference on November 21, 1951, endorsing the decision of unconditional withdrawal, correctly reflect the Telangana situation. The resolutions are reproduced on pp 426-430, *Ibid*.

<sup>4</sup> See pp 434-35 of the book cited above for an extract from P Sundarayya's letter in 1953, "On Our Differences".

<sup>5</sup> In these articles we have not included any material from the chapter, "Struggle Inside Jails" (pp 313-327) and the chapter, "The Women in the Telangana Movement" (pp 328-353) of the book cited above. During the period of the Telangana struggle, the struggle conducted inside the jails was part and parcel of the one outside. Compared with 12,000 persons arrested during the struggle against the Nizam, 50,000 were arrested during the military regime of the Union Government. For a brief account of the tortures, the brutalities, the indignities and the other atrocities let loose on the prisoners; of the cooked-up charges and the farcical enquiries, hearings and stories of witnesses; of the response by democrats all over the world and the wave of protests in India and abroad; and of the revolutionary zeal with which the Telangana heroes fought to the end, see the chapter, "Struggle Inside Jails". For an account of the important role played by women in the movement including some details of their active participation in struggles; of their heroic and stubborn resistance in defence of their dignity and against molestation, torture and rape; of their awakening to new social equality and to a new moral and cultural life; of the truly great sacrifices the movement called forth from them, see the chapter, "The Women in the Telangana Movement". The book also includes a poem, *Tales of Telangana*, written by Harindranath Chattopadhyay at the time of the armed struggle, which we have left out here owing to limitations of space.

# NOTES

## *Raj Committee Report*

AGRICULTURE has absorbed an increasing volume of resources by way of public investment in the infrastructure facilities such as irrigation, power, communications network, agricultural research and so on. The intervention of the Government in favour of fixing remunerative prices, procurement policies, storage facilities and credit expansion has also contributed substantially to improve the market environment for agriculture. Over the last decade the excess demand for foodgrains and certain raw materials has also shifted the terms of trade especially in favour of farmers with strong staying power.

Pumping large volume of resources into agriculture is justified not only on the grounds that 70 per cent of the Indian population ekes out its livelihood from this sector but also because a relatively larger mass of agricultural population lives far below the bare subsistence level. Self-sufficiency in foodgrains and agricultural raw materials also attracts public attention. It may sometimes be necessary to plan for a net inflow of resources into a relatively backward sector like agriculture. Proportionality in the rates of taxation may not be quite appropriate while we deal with different levels of per capita income.

A measure of its lighter burden is that tax on agriculture as a ratio of income is less than half of the non-agricultural sector.<sup>1</sup> The corresponding ratio is hardly one third in Punjab.<sup>2</sup> Whereas tax proceeds as a proportion of national income have more than doubled over the plans, the ratio for agriculture has declined by more than half especially since 1961.<sup>3</sup>

The tragedy of agricultural development since independence is that the lion's share of the benefits arising from improved market environment, favourable terms of trade and increased state intervention has gone to a relatively small stratum of rich farmers thereby widening the socio-economic distance between the rich landlords and the rural proletariat. Despite successive waves of land reforms, even today "the top 10 per cent of agricultural households seem to account for 25 per cent of private consumption, over 40 per cent of the total income of all households and not less than two thirds of privately owned wealth".<sup>4</sup> It is this stratum of landlords and rich farmers which has escaped the tax net so far. In fact, as the Committee on Taxation of Agricultural Wealth and Income puts it,

despite the surcharges and special levies on the larger holdings in Punjab and Haryana, in several districts, owners of holdings as large as 100 acres in size do not have to pay more than about 0.5 to 0.6 per cent of their income from land in the form of land revenue and allied taxes.<sup>5</sup> The ratio for undivided India was about 5 per cent at the dawn of the century. While highlighting the prosperity part of agriculture the Fifth Finance Commission warned that "as agricultural incomes grow, the disparities will become more pronounced".<sup>6</sup>

It is not so much because suitable instruments of mobilisation from the rural rich could not be conceived or forged but because of the power and influence exerted by this class especially in the state governments. As far back as 1954, the Taxation Enquiry Commission made a plea for the introduction of agricultural income tax.<sup>7</sup> Though resort was made by a couple of provincial governments following the Government of India Act 1935, even today it is largely directed to income from plantations in Assam and Kerala. The general trend has been towards surrendering the regressive land revenue without installing anything progressive in its place. The surcharges and cesses have proved to be just a drop in the ocean. While graduated agricultural income tax is non-existent in most of the states, agriculture has also been a haven for tax evasion and avoidance. It was in this context that the Committee on Taxation of Agricultural Wealth and Income was appointed in early 1972 with the following terms of reference :<sup>8</sup>

- a) to examine the present system of direct taxation of agricultural wealth and income (including capital gains) and suggest methods by which such taxation can be used more effectively for raising additional resources for development and for helping to achieve the objective of self-reliance ;
- b) to recommend specifically ways and means by which taxation of agricultural wealth and income can be used to reduce economic disparities and promote more efficient utilisation of available resources of land and labour ;
- c) to examine in detail and make recommendation on the necessary changes in the system of assessment, collection and distribution of these taxes such that the resources available to the states from such taxation can be maximised, without detriment to the rights and legitimate interests of any state ;
- d) to suggest the consequential changes, if any, on any system of taxation of wealth and income in general; and
- e) to indicate and make suggestions, if any, on any related matters.

Thus, additional resource mobilisation for development oriented towards a reduction of economic disparities in agricultural wealth and income and relative aspects of tax administration were the primary tasks entrusted to the Raj Committee.

The Committee is by no means allergic to indirect taxation ! Rooted in Keynesian traditions, it regards indirect taxation as "a useful

instrument for bringing about changes in the relative prices of different commodities and services thereby influencing the pattern of allocation of resources in desired directions" apart from reaching "sections of population that cannot be brought within the ambit of direct taxes".<sup>9</sup> But at the same time, like true left Keynesians and welfare theorists the Committee feels that reliance on indirect taxes alone will not ensure "comparable income groups bear roughly equivalent total tax burden". Besides, the Committee recognises the need for greater reliance on direct taxation with "a reasonable element of progression for mobilising resources from the agricultural sector".<sup>10</sup> However, 'equity' does not necessarily mean that the forms of direct taxation applicable to different categories of income and wealth should be identical since the organisational structure and consequently the tangible bases available for direct taxation differ from sector to sector.<sup>11</sup> One does not know whether the Committee believes that the ceilings legislation would reduce the concentration in the ownership of land or not. Nevertheless, it shares the doubt that the proposed ceilings on landholdings have greatly reduced the scope for progressive taxation in agriculture. But, since operational holdings are not subject to ceilings legislation, the Committee has turned its attention towards taxation based on *operational holdings* instead of an income from *ownership of land*.<sup>12</sup>

### *Contributions of the Committee*

In some important respects, the approach of the Raj Committee is basically different from that of the Wanchoo Committee. First of all, despite the much advertised concern for curbing the generation of black money, the Wanchoo Committee set its face against the scrapping of the outmoded institution like the Hindu Undivided Family, a gaping loophole through which hundreds of crores of potential tax money are seeping down into 'black' channels of the parallel economy. On the contrary the Raj Committee considers the nuclear family (consisting of husband, wife and minor children) as the appropriate unit for assessment.<sup>13</sup> This is meant to prevent large-scale evasion by splitting of incomes between family members which the Committee regards as a major factor in accentuating inequalities of wealth and income. When directed to top brackets this recommendation would help to reduce inequalities while augmenting public revenues.

Secondly, the Committee has clearly underlined the need for progressive agricultural taxation. It has also turned down land revenue along with the various cesses and surcharges mounted on it as unsuitable for progressive taxation. In this they have been in good company with the Kerala Taxation Enquiry Committee which condemned land revenue based on cadastral surveys and settlement as regressive and static.<sup>14</sup> But, in their search for alternatives the Raj Committee seems to have bypassed the major recommendations of the Kerala Committee. A progressive tax based on the capital value of land along with a graduated agricul

tural income tax were the major instruments of agricultural taxation recommended by the Kerala Committee. In its words :

in so far as the results of capital improvements, infrastructure facilities and the pressure of population on land would be adequately reflected in the capital value of land, only this would offer a flexible basis for a progressive tax on land provided a machinery could be created for periodic revision of the capital value of land.<sup>15</sup>

Apart from being progressive, land tax based on capital value could be highly productive. It can safely replace some of the minor taxes like betterment levy. The base would easily lend itself to graduation in the rates. If need be, cesses and surcharges could be mounted on it without losing its basic progressivity. It would also promote a framework of reference to deal with the problem of tax evasion in registration and stamp duties arising from transactions in landed property.<sup>16</sup> Of course, the Committee was aware of the complexities involved in the determination and periodic revision of the capital value of land. Nor was it oblivious of the elaborate valuation machinery required. Since some such practice exists in some local governments here and abroad one need not exaggerate the difficulties involved. However, this alternative has escaped the attention of the Raj Committee.

Instead, progressive surcharge on land revenue, integrated taxation of agricultural and non-agricultural incomes and wealth tax were the major alternatives which the Raj Committee had examined before coming up with the Agricultural Holdings Tax. Quite rightly, the Committee felt that the magnitude of surcharges required to achieve a reasonable degree of progression in the taxation of agriculture will have to be a very large multiple of the basic land revenue. But the most serious objection raised by them against using the existing land revenue as the basis for introducing progression is the lack of uniformity in the principles and procedures followed in different states and even in different areas within the same state in fixing the rate of land revenue.<sup>17</sup> Progression built on an inequitable base would only aggravate the anomalies in the land revenue.

The Raj Committee has recognised the constitutional propriety of the Central Government in imposing an integrated tax on agricultural and non-agricultural wealth. Wealth is regarded as a relatively stabler basis for taxation. By lowering the exemption limit the feasibility of covering 10-15 per cent of the agricultural population could also be ensured. They also think that it is relatively easier to administer. But it was the fear of harassment in the process of identifying the potential assesseees and the taxable assets as well as in the valuation of the assets that seemed to have prompted the Committee to reject this alternative as the principal instrument of resource mobilisation from the agricultural population.<sup>18</sup> However, as a supplement to the Agricultural Holdings Tax (AHT), they welcome wealth tax on agricultural property and a tax on capital gains arising out of transaction in such property.

Though they have suggested an increase in the basic exemption limit from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1.5 lakhs, they have favoured a drastic pruning of the various exemptions in the computation of wealth which raises the effective exemption limit to about Rs 4 lakhs.<sup>19</sup> They have also emphasised the elimination of loopholes provided by exemption limits and concessional treatment in the case of Hindu undivided families and charitable trusts, non-family holdings (such as agricultural companies, co-operatives, trusts and associations of persons) and so on.<sup>20</sup> In its search for an effective instrument for capturing at least a part of the windfall gains arising from transfer of agricultural land, the Committee has suggested the extension of Capital Gains Tax to agriculture. Being a tax on the gains from sale of an asset, the Committee felt that it should fall within the legislative powers of Parliament. Though the Committee is in favour of making a distinction between 'real' and 'illusory' context of capital gains it seeks to eliminate the artificial distinction between 'short' and 'long' term gains. Accordingly, it has suggested a method of prorating capital gains.<sup>21</sup>

The Committee is of the view that an integrated system of taxation of agricultural and non-agricultural incomes will neither be practicable nor effective enough in achieving the objectives of direct taxation in the present context.<sup>22</sup> It is regarded as impracticable because taxation of agricultural income vests exclusively with the states; and, any constitutional amendment would be opposed by the states since it would mean an erosion of their limited powers of taxation and an infringement of their autonomy.<sup>23</sup> Besides, they feel that proper assessment of agricultural income requires a degree of knowledge of local conditions that is available only to the state administration.<sup>24</sup>

But the most fundamental objection of the Committee to an integrated system stems from their rejection of agricultural income tax as an 'effective' instrument of mobilisation. The problem they have envisaged is the 'formidable difficulties' in the precise computation of actual agricultural income. Since the majority of farmers do not maintain detailed accounts, the Committee feels that the possibility of harassment by the tax officials and equally the opportunities for understanding true incomes are likely to be considerable in a system of direct taxation of agriculture based solely on the actual income concept.<sup>25</sup> In a way, both the objections rest on the problem of estimating the actual income of the farmer. This argument is not quite convincing. Difficulties on the assessment of 'true income' apply to a large number of producers, traders and professionals in the agricultural sector. How else do we explain Rs 10,000 crores of tax-evaded black money? If it were easy to determine the true income it should have been brought within the tax net. If, on the other hand, income in the non-agricultural sector is determinable but not actually collected, it may be because the tax officials exercise their discretionary powers in interpreting the dubious provisions of tax laws and the complex procedures for computing true income in favour of the tax

payer for a consideration. Harassment is only the other side of corruption; and the exercise of discretionary powers is inherent in all regulated and controlled activities of development administration. Do we then give up all regulation and control to minimise corruption? This would resemble the argument of the Wanchoo Committee that tax evasion could be reduced mainly through the drastic reduction of the marginal rate of taxation and removal of most of the economic controls.

It may be true that a long-term solution to resource mobilisation can be found only through higher forms of economic organisation like cooperative, collective or state farm on the basis of radical land reforms. Even when we deal with short-term problems within the constraints of constitutional limitations and property relations, we need not be inhibited by exaggerated difficulties like the farmers being too illiterate to maintain accurate accounts. Which class of farmers does the Raj Committee have in mind? Which generation of farmers? Maybe many among the poor peasants and agricultural workers do not send their children to school. However, this is not true of well-to-do farmers and rich landlords. Though some of them may be illiterate, most of their children are sufficiently literate to keep proper farm accounts. In any case, well-to-do farmers can also afford to employ part-time accountants to maintain their accounts. As argued in one of the Minutes of Dissent to the Report of the Taxation Enquiry and Resources Committee, Punjab :

When even petty traders and moneylenders in rural areas could be successfully assessed for income taxation under the Central Income Tax Act, taxing rich farmers (with clearly identified income-yielding assets) should not pose a serious problem of tax administration.<sup>28</sup>

The perspective of the Committee like this should have been more far-reaching. To constrain oneself with such arguments as illiteracy of the farmers and harassment by tax officials does not represent a dynamic approach to the problem. Graduated income tax is an important tool in the fiscal kit of 'New Economics' and 'Social Democracy'. Along with a progressive property tax, graduated income tax is the best which social democracy can offer in terms of resource mobilisation based on ability to pay. It is surprising that even this potential has been whittled down by a milder form of land tax like the AHT which is not free from the kinds of problems which the Committee has advanced against other alternatives.

Even its opposition to an integrated taxation of agricultural and non-agricultural incomes does not emanate from an overall concern for strengthening the fiscal powers of the states. As a part of an overall realignment of the Centre-State fiscal relations in favour of the states, constitutional obstacles may not be as insuperable as it is made out to be. It might as well be that the dominant class interests in agriculture would sabotage AHT as effectively as they would oppose agricultural income tax on some grounds or other. A bold and comprehensive approach on

problems impinging upon state autonomy, would have helped to place the problems in a broader perspective.

In the absence of an agricultural income tax with comparable graduation as obtaining in the income tax, partial integration of agricultural and non-agricultural incomes for purposes of income tax computation as proposed in the Finance Bill for 1973-74 would only enable a good part of the black money amassed from non-agricultural sources to be whitened at relatively lower effective rates if declared as agricultural income. When non-agricultural income is below Rs 5000, even Rupees ten lakhs of genuine agricultural income will not attract any income tax. In a fully integrated system, the marginal rate on Rupees ten lakhs would have been 97.75 per cent; and, even the average rate on Rupees 20 lakhs would have been around 95 per cent. But, under partial integration, the average rate would be reduced to less than 49 per cent.

All along the line, therefore, black money declared as agricultural income will bring about a substantial reduction in the effective rate of income tax. When Rupees one lakh of black money along with a non-agricultural income of another lakh is declared by an individual the average rate on Rupees two lakhs will be reduced from about 75 per cent to around 46 per cent. The corresponding rate for Rs 20,000 plus Rs 20,000 will be about 31 and 20 per cent respectively. The members of the Committee would be shocked by such an unintended use of their recommendations. Since the suggestion to combine the income of all members of a nuclear family has been ignored, a substantial volume of black money per family can be whitened every year on a relatively low rate of taxation.<sup>27</sup> These deficiencies would have been minimal in the alternative suggested by the Kerala Committee for adding agricultural to non-agricultural income which the Raj Committee has dismissed as impracticable.

### *Features of AHT*

The Raj Committee has sought to design a 'simple enough' tax 'within the present provisions of the Constitution'.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, the system was expected to satisfy three requirements, namely: <sup>29</sup>

- i) it must take into account the differences in the productivity of land depending upon the particular crops grown in a region;
- ii) its incidence in the different parts of the country must be uniform which means that it must take into account the differences in the productivity of land in different parts of the country; and,
- iii) it must reflect changes in productivity and prices over a period of time.

Differences in productivity of land arising from differences in the crop pattern were expected to be taken care of by working out a 'ratio of equivalence between lands growing different crops and then converting the average of each agricultural holding into a standard average by treating an average of land under a certain crop as the standard acre.'<sup>30</sup>

Apart from having a 'uniform incidence all over the country', the Committee has also aimed at building 'a degree of progression' into the system.<sup>31</sup> The Committee feels that the AHT takes into account the major factors underlying differences in the productivity of land such as :

- i) soil-climatic differences ;
- ii) conditions of water supply; and,
- iii) crops grown.

The Committee recognises the possibility of plot to plot differences in productivity even within a tract homogeneous in respect of soil and climate, water supply conditions and growing the same crops. But it argues that 'a land-capability survey based on a plot-by-plot soil classification all over the country will be too time-consuming and expensive'.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the Committee is satisfied by reducing the major elements of productivity of land to a comparable basis rather than establishing perfect comparability.<sup>33</sup>

The Committee has outlined the following steps towards the introduction of the Agricultural Holdings Tax <sup>34</sup>:

- i) the country should be divided into a sufficiently large number of soil-climatically homogeneous tracts so that most of the soil-climatic differences may be taken into account ;
- ii) for each such district/tract, norms of output of different crops per hectare for each year should be worked out on the basis of the estimates of yield for the previous ten years;
- iii) the norms of output per hectare of different crops in different districts/tracts should be valued at relevant average harvest prices of the preceding three years ;
- iv) the norms derived as above should provide the norms of the value of output per hectare of different crops in different districts/tracts ;
- v) from the value of the given output of the crops, allowance for the paid-out costs of cultivation other than expenses of irrigation and also for depreciation of assets (other than livestock) will be made ;
- vi) the norms arrived at in the above manner would form the rateable value of a hectare of land growing different crops in different districts/tracts ;
- vii) if, in a given year, average output of a crop in a district is less than half the average output of the earlier ten years, rateable value of land under such a crop should be taken as zero. Relief should be given for crop failures ;
- viii) to simplify the computation, crops under a district/tract may be suitably grouped under a few crop groups ;
- ix) for each district/tract there will be a schedule of rateable value of land per hectare under different crops/groups. The schedule should be revised every year taking into account the crop yields of the preceding 10 years, the harvest prices of the preceding 3 years and any revision that may be made from time to time in the scale of deduction

to be made on account of cultivation of different crops. The schedule of rateable value of land under different crops in each district/tract should be prepared on this basis every year and included in the legislation of the year in question. The construction of the schedule is the responsibility of the state governments;

x) the rateable value of an assessable landholding will be computed from the rateable values of land under the crops actually grown (harvested) on it during the year of assessment after deducting the expenses of irrigation in the manner indicated ;

xi) to provide for the costs of development, a development allowance should be given to all agricultural holdings at the rate of 20 per cent of the rateable value subject to a maximum of Rs 1000 ;

xii) the incidence of AHT decreases progressively on small holdings with rateable value upto Rs 600. AHT of one rupee would be charged to holdings of rateable value below Rs 600 ;

xiii) AHT would be levied on operational holdings and on a family basis (family consisting of husband, wife and minor children) so as to discourage illegal and concealed leases and protect the rights of tenants;

xiv) AHT would be suitably adjusted to fallow lands and fodder crops.

The Committee has suggested that AHT may be implemented in two phases. Their primary concern is to replace land revenue by AHT on all operational holdings with rateable value of Rs 5000 or more. Its extension to cover operational holdings with rateable value from Rs 2500 to Rs 5000 may be undertaken in the second phase. Holdings with rateable value of Rs 600 and below is to pay a flat rate of rupee one per holding. The coverage between Rs 600 and Rs 2500 is left to the discretion of the states. The Committee has suggested that the rateable value of land held in trust should be notionally apportioned between beneficiaries. No concessional rate was admissible for charitable or religious trusts. Plantations growing non-plantation crop will also be subject to AHT.<sup>35</sup> As estimated by the Committee, AHT even when applied only to holdings with rateable value of Rs 5000 and above, would bring in additional revenue of Rs 150 crores per annum. It will be considerably larger, possibly Rs 200 crores, if AHT is extended to all holdings with rateable value of Rs 2500 and above.<sup>36</sup> It is interesting to note that, when fully implemented, resource mobilisation through direct taxation of agriculture will not be anything more than 3 per cent of the national income from agriculture.

#### *Some Inadequacies of the Proposal*

Some critics have called AHT 'land revenue brought in through the back door'. This may be true in so far as AHT is based on the method of determining average productivity in each tract for each crop as applied to cesses on commercial crops in states like Maharashtra. But, unlike the crop cesses, AHT introduces progression in the rates.

However, the method of determination of rateable value and slab rates suggested by the Committee would imply a degree of progression far milder than that of a fully integrated income tax on agricultural and non-agricultural incomes or agricultural income tax rates similar to that of the income tax. One of the factors moderating the progressivity is the method of determining the rateable value. For instance, the use of 10 year average for production and 5 year average for prices would grossly understate the current rateable value of agricultural holdings. Though Raj has conceded this in his V K Ramaswamy Memorial Lecture and is prepared to accept shorter periods for the determination of the respective averages the scheme outlined in his report represents a lenient approach to taxation of the agricultural sector. In this respect AHT violates intersectoral equity (horizontal and vertical) in the incidence of direct taxation which constitutes an important objective of the Committee.

By linking AHT to a concept of 'potential' productivity, Raj is led to explain the possible inequities in the average productivity in crop or crop groups in a tract by arguing that such inequity is already present in crop cesses in various states. Since the basis of crop cess has not so far been challenged or struck down by courts of law, Raj feels confident that AHT can withstand any test before the judiciary. The validity of this assertion remains to be seen.

Raj has also recognised that AHT, which is directed against operational holdings, leaves out rental income. This may be regarded as a fresh element of inequity and perversity in the system of agricultural taxation in India.<sup>37</sup> According to Hanumantha Rao, since the legally stipulated rents are significantly lower than free market rents and the difference between them far exceeds the possible tax liability under the AHT, landowners may stand to gain by concealed leases even after the payment of AHT. As to the land leased in by the farm operator subject to AHT, Hanumantha Rao feels that there will be no incentive to get it registered either for the operator leasing in or for the owner leasing out such land. The operator has no incentive because he has to pay AHT if the land leased in is duly registered. The owner of such land will not have any incentive because apart from the risk of losing ownership rights, the legally stipulated rents are much lower than market rents. Further, by recommending operational holding as the unit, the Committee allows a significant loophole for tax evasion. Fictitious leases to friends and relatives by large landowners may also be created with a view to evade AHT.<sup>38</sup> In his V K Ramaswamy Memorial Lecture, Raj has suggested that, though serious, this lacuna can be overcome by amending the Indian Income Tax Act so as to include rent as non-agricultural income as it has been the case with interest on loans to farmers and dividends from agricultural companies. It is obvious that Raj is seeking superficial legal remedies to deal with problems posed by concealed tenancy which reflects the hard politico-economic realities prevailing in the countryside. At the same time, it is no use throwing up one's

hands and exclaiming that 'politically nothing works in this country'!

The Committee has envisaged an 'equitable' land tax which takes into account 'the differences in the productivity of land all over the country on the basis of certain objective criteria and uniform procedures'.<sup>99</sup> But the overall scheme outlined by the Committee seems to fall far short of the requirements. Raj is aware of the administrative problems such as the non-availability of records for operating holdings, identification of *benami* tenurial relationships in land, deliberate misreporting of crop patterns and so on. People in the countryside as well as the revenue authorities know the top 10 or 15 per cent of the holdings owned or operated by families in the same way that tax evaders and black money holders are known. But in view of the notoriety of revenue administration at the grassroots in manipulating basic records of landholdings, tenurial relationships and so on, it will be unrealistic to rely on these records and information for AHT. Maybe the delineation of soil-climatically homogeneous tracts and classification of crops into crop-groups for each district/tract may not be as cumbersome and time-consuming as the plot-by-plot survey and settlement characteristic of land revenue under the *ryotwari* system. But it does call for a substantial administrative effort to evolve objective norms and criteria for the classification of assesseees, determination of rateable values, prescription of a schedule of rates and so on. Even if we make a heroic assumption that the state administrative machinery would gear itself to the task, it would be impossible to ensure uniformity in the system of classification.

Apart from unique geographical and environmental features, the criteria and methods employed by the various state administrations might defy uniformity. If the experience of land reforms is any guide, efforts towards uniformity made by the proposed All India Committee on AHT will flounder against the vested interests in the countryside and the corrupt machinery at the grassroots of revenue administration. It would be too much to expect that they would rise above their class interests and heritage of corrupt practices. No matter how efficient instruments of mobilisation are, they are all bound to fail unless the land question is satisfactorily solved.

M J K THAVARAJ

<sup>1</sup> Ved P Gandhi, "Tax Burden of Indian Agriculture", Cambridge, Harvard Law School, 1967, See also *Report of the Taxation Enquiry Committee*, Government of Kerala, 1969, p 82.

<sup>2</sup> M J K Thavaraj and K S R N. Sarma, "Incidence of Taxation in the Punjab", *Economic Times*, May 4, 1971. See also the Minute of Dissent by M J K Thavaraj in the *Report of the Taxation Enquiry and Resources Committee*, Government of Punjab, 1971.

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Committee on Taxation of Agricultural Wealth and Income*, Government of India, Ministry of Finance, October 1972, p 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p 13.

- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 9-10.
- <sup>6</sup> *Report of the Fifth Finance Commission*, Government of India, 1969, pp 83-84.
- <sup>7</sup> *Report of the Taxation Enquiry Commission 1953-54*, Vol III, pp 198-205.
- <sup>8</sup> *Report of the Committee on Taxation of Agricultural Wealth and Income*, *op. cit.*, p (ii).
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p 4.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p 5.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p 9.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p 11.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p 12.
- <sup>14</sup> *Report of the Taxation Enquiry Committee*, Government of Kerala, 1969, *op. cit.*, p 8.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p 8.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p 84.
- <sup>17</sup> *Report of the Committee on Taxation of Agricultural Wealth and Income*, *op. cit.*, p 19.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 17-18.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p 76.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 77-81.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 83-86.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p 18.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p 18.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 18-19.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p 19.
- <sup>26</sup> *Report of the Taxation Enquiry and Resources Committee*, Punjab 1971, p 314.
- <sup>27</sup> "Budget Highlights : Ominous Signs for Fifth Plan", *Social Scientist*, April 1973, pp 37-54.
- <sup>28</sup> *Report of the Committee on Taxation of Agricultural Wealth and Income*, *op. cit.*, pp 69-71.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 21-22.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p 22.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p 22.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 25-26.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p 26.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 3.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 45-54.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p 63.
- <sup>37</sup> C H Hanumantha Rao, "Agricultural Taxation: Raj Committee Report", *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 25, 1972, pp 2345-47.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p 2345.
- <sup>39</sup> *Report of the Committee on Taxation of Agricultural Wealth and Income*, *op. cit.*, p 25.

## *Academic Freedom in the 'Free World'*

ONE of the claims which the western nations advance to prove the superiority of their social system is the so-called academic and intellectual freedom in their universities. Socialist and left critics always held this claim a hoax. Expulsion of R P Dutt from Oxford for no 'crime' other than hailing the Bolshevik Revolution during the First World War days is not too old a story to forget. At about the same time Bertrand Russell was relieved of his fellowship in Trinity College, Cambridge for opposing the conscription from a pacifist standpoint. Years later Russell was unceremoniously shown the door in New York City College after ridiculous court proceedings which established him as 'immoral'. During the black fifties of the McCarthy witch-hunts scores upon scores of professors were hounded out of the American universities. Such cases are a legion and too well-known to be recounted here.

There is a complacent misconception, assiduously sought to be driven home, that such bad old days are dead as dodo, and the liberal West is again her true self. But such tendentious propaganda is belied by dozens of recent events, among which two have acquired a sort of international notoriety.

One is the expulsion of Professor H Bruce Franklin from the English faculty of Stanford University in the United States. The other is the rejection on political grounds of the proposal to appoint the internationally well-known Marxist economist Ernest Mandel to a professorship in the Free University, Berlin (West).

Professor Franklin was a member of the Department of English and his appointment conferred 'indefinite' or 'permanent' tenure. An advisory committee of seven academic staff members appointed by the President of Stanford University, Richard W Syman, recommended the dismissal. That was the peg on which a great university in the leading country of the 'free world' sought to hang an academic.

Why? The report of the advisory committee submitted on January 5, 1972 makes it amply clear that they recommended the dismissal of their colleague not on grounds of scholarly or pedagogical incompetence. It was because he had performed what the committee considered "actions which were disruptive of the good order of the University". And what were they? Mainly making speeches which are said to have encouraged

students to participate in anti-war demonstrations. Some of these demonstrations have led to occupation of university buildings and disruption of a meeting addressed by the arch warmonger Henry Cabot Lodge. He was also accused of "incitement to the occupation of the University Computer Building and the prevention of its operation and incitement to resist a police order of dispersal outside the building and to commit unspecified acts of violence".

The committee rejected Franklin's denial of his direct incitement to violence or personal involvement in it. The reason? Simply because while denying his direct involvement and participation he was not prepared to condemn the youngsters; inspired by the noblest of human impulses against the genocide in Vietnam, they demonstrated their sense of shame and horror. What future awaits humanity if its young generation can look on impassively without batting an eyelid at the sort of heinous killings of men, women and children perpetrated by Yankee barbarians? Though Franklin was not directly involved in the protest action which might have led to what the committee considers excess and violence, he did not want to go on record condemning it. Like Regis Debray in his famous Camiri trial in Bolivia, Franklin said, in effect:

I am sorry, I have to plead not guilty, for I did not have the opportunity to commit the actions I am charged with.

The Committee catches hold of this bold and idealistic statement and gleefully quotes Franklin. The Professor's affidavit quoted by the committee says :

I have the right to voice public approval of the fragging of officers in Vietnam and the breaking of windows at Stanford University. In fact I am ashamed to admit that I have not engaged in any of these activities, nor incited, counselled, advised or urged others to do so. So I find myself in the awkward position of defending myself against allegations of things which I have not done but perhaps I should have done.

Certainly this is not a confession of the 'crimes' preferred against him by the University. It is strange that the committee considered so. And stranger still is the punishment recommended not for the 'crime' committed, but for the intentions of the accused. Here is a clear case of the western standards of justice.

Franklin was dismissed for his radical views, his human sympathies, his opposition to the war, his dislike of police occupation of the University campus. This is proved beyond doubt by the extracts of the Professor's 'incriminating' speeches, quoted by the committee. Here is one :

And we get very upset when we find our beautiful campus crawling with pigs who stop and harass people and rip off and beat half the people. Well, this is just a very, very mild taste of what life is like in the black and brown communities of this country where the pigs

come by every night and if you're young and if you're black and brown they stop you and ask your ID and rip you off for suspicion of burglary and where there are dogs there and where there's helicopter overhead that's part of the same struggle, and where they shoot you. And the pigs who are here tonight, that's those San Jose pigs have just murdered a black brother in San Jose, and that's normal life there. People murdered in the streets and that is why we call them pigs. Although it's a little unfair to the four-footed variety, because they don't do that kind of thing.\*

Another 'incriminating' fact is Franklin's approval and espousal of the Black Panther Party.

The committee quotes Franklin as follows, with a sort of unconcealed glee, that at last they were able to identify their colleague's true colours :

And Black Panther Party teaches us that the people of Laos and the people of South Vietnam are not another separate nation state. That they are our brothers and sisters because they are just other oppressed communities of the same empire. The Black Panther Party teaches us that today while this meeting was going on brothers and sisters, blood brothers and sisters of us, were killed in Laos, in Vietnam and Cambodia, in the black and brown communities of the United States of America. They teach us that this is all one struggle and the interconnections are in every place. Even if you think about what Laos is all about; what is the chief cash export of Laos, who knows? . . . Opium, all the heroin on this coast comes from Laos. And it's all brought in by the CIA. It is grown and harvested by Neo tribesmen and flown out by Air America, the CIA airline. And it is brought into this state as part of the oppression, particularly of black and brown people here, but also of white youth. . . and is just as much a part of counter insurgency system as the pigs who are waging war on this campus.

Finally, Franklin is dismissed so that the security and order of the 'free world' are safeguarded.

This picture of the 'academic freedom' in the 'free world' would be complete with the case of Professor Ernest Mandel. The door of the so-called Free University of West Berlin was closed on Mandel, not for the 'disruption of order' already committed or likely to commit. It is a case of victimisation for the particular views held by the applicant.

After all the usual processing and procedures, the council of the Free University's department of economics unreservedly and unanimously recommended Ernest Mandel, Belgian national of German birth, to be appointed to the Professorship of economics "with special reference to the economic theory of social policy". According to law and practice of the Federal Republic of Germany, this recommendation has to be approved by the Senator for Science and Art for West Berlin on behalf of the Government. The Senator in this case was Warner Stein. The

Senator rejected the unanimous recommendation of the council on February 23, 1972. In this case also, as in the case of Franklin of Stanford, no question of the qualification or competence was raised.

The West Berlin Senate, dominated by the Social Democratic Party of Chancellor and Nobel Peace Laureate Willy Brandt, issued a handout on the decision of Stein. It nails down "Ernest Mandel's political activities against the democratic constitutional Government" which disqualified him for the post. It went on to analyse and assess the subversive proclivities of the dangerous economist as follows :

Mr Mandel's activities were not aimed at development within the political framework provided by the Constitution, particularly the clause bearing on the welfare state which holds open the possibility of realising a socialist ideal through constitutional procedures; his activities aim unequivocally at the revolutionary elimination of this free and democratic order and of the institutions provided by this order for the formation of opinion and making of decisions in political matters.

No further comment is required. Freedom in the western capitalist nations is available only for those who accept the system in toto. Only minor changes within the system by those who uphold its sanctity are legitimate. Any thing beyond this prescribed limit is subversive and culpable.

P GOVINDA PILLAI

\*Certain words are missing because the extract is made out from a tape record which was not clear here and there.

## DISCUSSION

*The academic year which is drawing to a close saw quite unprecedented concern by teachers with the problems of governance at the universities, and action on proposals of reform. This concern is voiced in a note, 'Towards the Framing of the University Act' by the Saugar University Teachers Association, excerpts from which are published below.*

THE objectives of a university are the search for truth, the transmission of truth through education and instruction and the development of a cultural climate of the community. The accomplishment of these tasks demands complete commitment to the ideals of truth. And this can be achieved only if the university is guaranteed freedom to function . . . The true base for a university must be a democratic set-up which works on consensus and guarantees to it the freedom to function.

It must also be realised that the focus of university life should be the teachers and students together engaged in the pursuit of scholarship and not the buildings, the library or the laboratories. It is the spirit of inquiry which has to be nurtured and reared; and this aim cannot be attained except by keeping the human factor in the forefront of attention.

The university administration has but a subsidiary role, namely, that of assisting and facilitating the fulfilment of the objectives. There is a constant danger to be guarded against, of the bureaucracy multiplying itself so that the routine of running the university becomes the major preoccupation of the state. The university's freedom to pursue its objectives is bound to be hampered by such a development.

Thus, while the university should never become 'a state within the state', it should not be degraded to the rank of a public institution bereft of all individuality. By the same token, the university teacher is not primarily to be regarded as a civil servant. He must think of himself as a researcher and educator, not as a bureaucrat or administrator. The state must act as the ubiquitous overseer of the university's corporate independence.

University legislation must, therefore, provide a broad institutional pattern which should not tend to perpetuate uniformity. Each university must work according to its own genius and speciality, but within the framework of the Act. Any attempt at uniformity in patterning the universities in a single mould will result in the loss of individuality and

distinctive character. However, in areas where the requirements of administration by the state call for some similarity, the Act must have an in-built flexibility. If this is not done, the dangers of regimentation and authoritarianism are likely to invade the life of the academic community destroying the democratic character of the university.

### *University Autonomy and Academic Freedom*

The Kothari Commission makes a distinction between academic freedom and university autonomy. Freedom implies the right of the teacher to pursue and propagate truth, and to challenge the convictions of others in the spirit of inquiry or in the pursuit of truth. Autonomy means the rights of university to choose students, appoint and promote teachers, determine the courses of studies, methods of instruction and evaluation of performance, and to select areas of research.

While it may be possible to separate the two issues, both are inevitably interlinked. Legislative enactment seeking to guarantee academic freedom and university autonomy also brings into operation an indirect control over both freedoms. Coupled with the financial control the state should not yield to the temptation of curtailing the freedom to pursue the objectives of the university.

### *Social Accountability*

The fact that the state grants a charter and funds does not mean that it can arrogate to itself the right to control the functioning of the university. Nor does it mean that the university can demand both freedom and funds without being accountable to the society. A university is responsible to society in the sense that the investment made on it must be properly used so as to fulfil the objectives for which it stands. If the university engages itself in research and pursuit of truth and in the transmission of knowledge, if it develops scholarship and creates an intellectual culture, it would have amply accounted for the investment made in it.

Investments in universities are long-term-return-yielding investments. Universities contribute to society, not only in the form of tangibles, the developed human material but also in the form of intangibles, in ideas and thoughts which serve to transform the social order itself. In return, society has to guarantee freedom to the universities and to protect them from other interference.

### *Social Relevance*

It is often said that universities must be engaged in work which is socially relevant. What does it mean? Is it the function of the university to prepare students for vocations, give training for manpower or offer courses to curb unemployment and indiscipline? The answer is no. This is not the job of the university. There are specialised institutions, professional, technical and commercial, whose function it is to meet these requirements of

society. Schools and colleges, home and social institutions exist to fulfil the same needs. The social relevance of the universities is something entirely different. The fact that they promote the development of critical thinking, evolve new ideas and bring about an intellectual revolution is what matters. It is these ideas and thinking that will eventually lead to the transformation of society. Universities cannot be socially relevant in any other way.

### *Democratisation of University Education*

The process of democratisation of university education involves, among other things, the following guidelines: (1) the departmental committees which should comprise all the teachers of the department and senior students chosen on merit and excellence should be the pivots of all decision-making; (2) the administration of the university should be in the hands of democratic leaders who should so function that the decision-making process is facilitated; (3) since the life of the university revolves around intellectual activity and grows out of a cohesive interaction of students and teachers, they, together with sections of the community, should be represented on the various governing bodies which make policy and take decisions; consensus and not brute majority should be the basis of the decisions of the governing boards; and (4) no institution or authority should wield absolute power of decision-making except the democratically constituted bodies of the university.

These are some of the principles which should govern the structure of our universities. We believe that university teachers, as distinct from university administrators, should be associated with the work of framing and drafting of legislation concerning universities. For teachers will not only reflect the consensus of academic life, but will also be able to add a new dimension to university reforms.

SAUGAR UNIVERSITY TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

# COMMUNICATION

## *West Bengal Today*

BIPLAB DASGUPTA in his article in *Social Scientist* (March 1973) has made several mistakes in characterising the theoretical position and practice of the revolutionary people's democratic movement. I want to draw attention to what I consider the most serious of these.

First, to state that "the CPI (M) view is that the dominant section of the Indian ruling class is big business of Indian origin, with the feudal elements as its allies" (p 9) does not adequately or accurately represent the CPI(M)'s characterisation of the state in India. The Programme states:

The present Indian state is the organ of the class rule of the bourgeoisie and landlord, led by the big bourgeoisie, who are increasingly collaborating with foreign finance capital in pursuit of the capitalist path of development.<sup>1</sup>

In its Programme and other documents, the CPI(M) has made it clear that while in the main landlords preserve a feudal and semi-feudal character, the term *landlord* must also be taken to encompass those landlords who have adopted in varying degrees the capitalist mode of production. The development of capitalism in agriculture must in no way be underestimated.

Secondly, Biplab Desgupta's article does not appreciate the fact that the proclaimed objective of the agrarian revolution, the axis of the people's democratic revolution, is *the abolition of landlordism in all its forms*; and that the contradiction between the numerically small class of landlords on the one hand and the great mass of the peasantry on the other occupies a crucial position among the fundamental contradictions of this society.

Not only does he refer with easy assurance to the Bangla Congress—which functioned as an agent of the ruling classes and which has now merged with the ruling Congress—as "a party of the rich peasants" (p 5); not only does he refer toother "rich peasant parties" within the United

Front (p 8); he also confers major credit upon the United Front for "the public exposure of the class base of some of the rich peasant parties" (p 8).

The CPI(M) with whose position Biplab Dasgupta agrees has not made the mechanical classification of these parties as parties of the rich peasantry. Every party and every individual cannot be *directly* labelled the party of a particular class or stratum; the class contradictions fast maturing under the impact of the economic crisis and the content and momentum of the class struggle involve changes in the correlation of class forces, twists and turns which have an impact on the nature and policies of these parties and work against such facile labelling.

Far more serious is Biplab Dasgupta's assertion that "the Marxists advised the landless labourers and poor peasants to take over the land of the rich peasants whenever they were in excess of the maximum limit prescribed by them . . . . In response to this call about 300,000 acres of land were seized by the landless and poor and redistributed" (p 6). This statement does not merely run counter to the specific experience of the land struggle in West Bengal which directed its fire against landlordism; it seriously misinterprets the CPI(M)'s theoretical and political stand, viewpoint and outlook on the land question and on the entire question of the agrarian revolution.

Biplab Dasgupta either plainly confuses the terms *landlord* and *rich peasant* or believes that Marxists may use them interchangeably. According to Marxism-Leninism as reflected in the writings of Lenin, the position taken by the Second Congress of the Communist International, the analysis of class status in the countryside by the Communist Party of China and the definitions accepted by the CPI(M), the difference, by no means subtle, between *landlords* and *rich peasants* may be expressed thus: A *landlord* is a parasite, a person who owns land but does engage himself or his family in the labour of cultivation and lives by exploiting the peasantry. Exploitation by landlords is chiefly in the form of land rent, moneylending, hiring of labour or the simultaneous carrying on of industrial or commercial enterprises; the major form of exploitation is, of course, the exaction of land rent from the mass of the peasantry. A *rich peasant* as a rule owns land, though some rich peasants own only part of their land and rent the remainder. The most important distinction between a landlord and a rich peasant is that while a landlord is a parasite, the rich peasant engages himself and his family in the labour of cultivation. He generally has more and better instruments of production and more liqued capital than the average; and as a rule depends on exploitation for a part or even the major part of his means of livelihood. The main form of exploitation by the rich peasant is the hiring of wage labour though in addition he may let out part of his land, practise exploitation through land rent, lend money or engage in industry and commerce.

Marxist-Leninist parties the world over, while considering the question who are the friends and who are the enemies of the revolution,

have made a crucial and historic difference between the two classes. While they have realised that "the big peasants . . . constitute the largest of the bourgeois strata which are direct and determined enemies of the revolutionary proletariat"; and while they have, in all their work in the countryside, striven to liberate "the toiling and exploited majority of the rural population from the ideological and political influence of these exploiters", they have made it very clear that "the expropriation even of the big peasants certainly cannot be made an immediate task of the victorious proletariat, for the material, in particular the technical, conditions as well as the social conditions for the socialisation of such farms are still lacking".

The refusal to make a theoretical and political distinction between landlords and rich peasants during the stage of the people's democratic revolution has nothing to do with revolutionary Marxism-Leninism. It belongs to the counter-revolutionary theory and practice of Trotskyism which cannot stomach anything less than a one-stage 'socialist' revolution where the bourgeois-democratic revolution has not been completed and sees landlords and rich peasants as a mass of exploiters to be taken on and liquidated simultaneously.

As for India, the party of the working class, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), has made it clear in its Programme and in other documents that while the Congress Party tries to make the landlord and rich peasant classes its main political base in the countryside, Marxists cannot fail to see that the objective of the agrarian revolution is the abolition of landlordism in all its forms, and that a sustained attempt must be made to bring the class of rich peasant, by and large, into the democratic front:

The rich peasants are another influential section among the peasantry. The Congress agrarian reforms have undoubtedly benefited certain sections of them and to some extent they have gained under the rule of the new post-independence regime. They aspire to join the ranks of capitalist landlords and by virtue of their engaging agricultural labour on hire for work in their farms, they entertain hostility to them. Nonetheless, heavy taxation, high prices for industrial goods and inflation constantly harass them so as to make their future uncertain. Subjected to the ravages of the market under the grip of the monopolist traders, both foreign and Indian, they come up often against the oppressive policies pursued by the bourgeois-landlord government. *By and large, they can also, therefore, be brought into the democratic front and retained as allies in the people's democratic revolution*<sup>4</sup> (Emphasis added).

Thirdly, Biplab Dasgupta has evidently confused the *ruling classes* with the *ruling party* when he asserts that "while the main weapon of the ruling class in West Bengal today is coercion, in the rest of India (excluding Kerala and some places of Andhra, Punjab and Madras) it enjoys strong political support, whatever be the reasons for it" (p 16).

The *ruling Congress Party* may be relatively weak in Kerala, compared with its strength in all other states except West Bengal and Tripura, and taking into account the organised strength and striking power of the democratic movement led by the CPI (M). It is certainly in a pitiable position in Tamil Nadu so far as its mass support and organisation are concerned and has been forced to seek favours from the ADMK (with the CPI playing its active role of intermediary and hanger-on).

But from this it would be totally wrong to conclude that the *ruling classes* do not enjoy 'strong political support' in these states. Biplab Dasgupta must make up his mind whether the Congress (O), which is one of the strongest parties in Tamil Nadu in terms of organisation and support, represents the ruling classes or not; he must also examine for himself whose interests the DMK represents.

These are only the most serious of the inaccuracies found in the article 'West Bengal Today'. They detract seriously from the value of the summing up of the United Front experience in West Bengal—where the left and democratic forces led by the CPI(M) have conducted a heroic, sustained and largely successful struggle against the class policies and terror of the ruling classes and their premier political party, the ruling Congress, and have greatly expanded their base among the people.

E MADHAN MOHAN RAO

<sup>1</sup> *Programme of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)*, para 56, p 23, (latest edition).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, V I Lenin, *To The Rural Poor*; "Preliminary Draft of Theses on the Agrarian Question for the Second Congress of the Communist International" included in *A Collection on the Agrarian Question*, brought out by the National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1969; "Decisions Concerning the Differentiation of Class Status in the Countryside" adopted by the Government of the People's Republic of China in 1950, "How to Analyse Class Status in the Countryside", and "The Agrarian Reform Law of the People's Republic of China", included in the collection cited above; Mao Tse-tung, "How to Differentiate the Classes in the Rural Areas", written in October 1933 and included in Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Writings*, NBA, Calcutta, 1967; Mao Tse-tung, "Different Tactics for Carrying out the Land Law in Different Areas" and "Correct the 'Left' Errors in Land Reform Propaganda", *Selected Works*, Vol IV, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1969.

<sup>3</sup> "Preliminary Draft of Theses on the Agrarian Question for the Second Congress of the Communist International", pp 5-6, *A Collection on the Agrarian Question*, NBA *op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> *Programme of the CPI (M)*, *op. cit.*, para 103, p 44-45.

## BOOK REVIEW

ERNEST MANDEL, *MARXIST ECONOMIC THEORY* (Translated by Brian Pearce), Rupa & Co., Calcutta, 1971 pp 797 Rs 22.

ERNEST Mandel is well known as the leading theoretician of the Trotskyite group which calls itself the Fourth International. A prolific writer on Marxism, his books and articles are widely read both in the old and new left circles in Europe and elsewhere. *Marxist Economic Theory* is Mandel's masterpiece to date.

The English translation of this work is now available in India as paperback in a single volume running to nearly 800 pages. The title is slightly misleading, for *Marxist Economic Theory* is not primarily a theoretical work. It is a well-documented analysis of the origins and development of the capitalist system, using Marxist theoretical formulations. It attempts too, to explain and elaborate theory without, of course, making any original contribution to the political economy of Marxism. Mandel employs a mass of historical, even archaeological, data and he analyses modern capitalism from a wealth of contemporary instances.

The early chapters seek to discover the common features of precapitalist economic categories in all the civilisations which have reached the stage of developed international trade. Although this effort to 'de-Westernise' the material, except that relating to nineteenth century capitalism, may not have fully succeeded in view of the obvious limitations, Mandel draws on resources from the societies of India, China, the Arab East and Africa. The first four chapters take the reader from the origins of social divisions of labour and of surplus product to the beginnings of petty commodity production and from there on to money and capital accumulation.

These form an interesting prelude to the contradictions of capitalism discussed in chapter five, followed by chapters on trade, credit and agriculture and reproduction and growth of national income. Chapter eleven contains a knowledgeable survey of the various phases of periodic crises which are the bane of capitalism; and the business cycle theories which have been advanced to explain the booms and bursts.

The theme of capitalist development is continued through monopoly capitalism, imperialism and the epoch of capitalist decline. At this, the final stage which the system has reached, the state steps in as a guarantor of monopoly profits and there is an increasing fusion between the state apparatus and the monopolies. Here Mandel deals with such questions as the changed nature of crises and inflation as a 'permanent tendency' of 'modern war capitalism'. The so-called 'socialists' make their appearance, state interventionists in this disguise, in a desperate bid to save the system from its doom. The growth of a 'public sector' and even the nationalisation of certain unprofitable branches of industry do not amount to 'socialism'. As Mandel says, "an economy can no more be a 'little bit socialist' than a woman can be 'a little bit' pregnant".

Mandel highlights the intensification of a number of inherent contradictions between the organised and planned character of production and the anarchy of capitalism as a whole. The idea of planning, "bourgeois in origin", is adopted only to the extent that it does not imperil the profit motive, and does not embrace the whole of economic life. The problem of underdevelopment—a result of undercapitalisation in the colonial and semi-colonial economies—becomes more acute as the already excessive overcapitalisation of the big capitalist countries necessitates huge unproductive expenditures to ward off long-term stagnation. In the added contradiction between the metropolitan and satellite territories, the capitalist development in the latter is blocked by the superprofits extracted from cheap labour, cartel rent—as from oil—and a vicious alliance with colonial bourgeoisie. "Monopoly capitalism becomes more and more a fetter on the development of productive forces. Henceforward, its parasitic character explodes in the world's face in a new epoch of history, filled with convulsions, the age of capitalist decline, war, revolutions and counter-revolutions."

After the 'epoch of capitalist decline' comes the discussion of the Soviet economy and of Socialism. It is here that Mandel's Trotskyite obsessions bristle, seriously distorting his treatment of both subjects. However, he shows a good understanding of the early difficulties in 1917 and after the civil war. He also gives fulsome credit to the 'remarkable development of the productive forces' in the young Soviet State. But Mandel gives only a partial account of the phenomenal economic development of the Soviet Union before the Second World War. According to him, things have apparently been wrong ever since the 'super industrialisation' proposals of the Left opposition in the mid-20s were rejected! The accounts of post-war trends are neither very consecutive nor discriminating; bits of later information being apparently tacked on to an earlier draft dealing mainly with the situation in the mid-50s.

Mandel takes a curious stand about "a contradictory combination (in the USSR) of a non-capitalist mode of production and a still basically bourgeois mode of distribution", by which he means wage differences. It is admitted that such a mode of distribution, along

with commodity production, is inevitable so long as productive power remains insufficient to "ensure to each human being the satisfaction of his fundamental needs". On page 567 Mandel stresses the point that "the shortage of use-values prolongs the life of exchange value".

But such "production of an abundance of use-values" only becomes possible in Marx's 'higher stage of Socialism' or 'Communism'. Yet Ernest Mandel wrongly persists in calling the stage previous to this as a "society transitional between capitalism and Socialism". In the chapter dealing with Soviet economy he harps on the theme that economic categories "commodity, value and money" should not continue under Socialism !

Mandel looks to the future and makes a forecast on the state of political economy. When the age of plenty has begun and when commodity production and economic calculation become superfluous, political economy will wither away. According to the author of *Marxist Economic Theory*, "Marxist economists can claim the honour of being the first category of men of learning to work consciously towards the abolition of their profession". That is also the last sentence of the book. It is followed by an extensive bibliography of 35 pages.

P N VARUGHESE

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## FROM THE EDITOR

THE slim and uneasy chances of peace breaking out in Indochina have spread panic in the South East Asian capitals, both among the 'domino' theorists and the local supporters of American presence in the region. Malcolm Caldwell, writing on the spheres of influence in the Malay world, expertly traces the process of displacement of European empires—Dutch and British—by American overlordship. He gives, at the same time, glimpses of the 'wave of the future, the revolutionary struggles of the people'.

Also in this issue, E M S Namboodiripad answers Joan Robinson on the relevance of Marxian economics today. We invite readers to take part in this debate through the Communication column of *Social Scientist* with the aim of applying Marxist theory to the specific conditions of our country.

Sustained research under the multi-disciplinary methodology of the social sciences has already yielded guidelines for a scientific comprehension of ancient and medieval Indian history. In discussing Dasa-Sudra slavery, Sharad Patil contributes to the progress of historical research along materialist lines, vastly enhancing the understanding of our past.

MALCOLM CALDWELL

### *Imperialism in the Malay World*

ADAM Smith—who, along with his Scottish contemporaries, has so much to answer for in his formulation of the insidious theory and practice of industrial revolution—noted at the end of the eighteenth century the significance of Anglo-Dutch economic and commercial rivalry.<sup>1</sup> It was a rivalry which extended all the way to South East Asia. The Netherlands, although at this time “. . . in proportion to the extent of the land and the number of its inhabitants by far the richest country in Europe. . .”, and therefore also endowed with the “greatest share of the carrying trade”, were significantly weak in home industry. Smith correctly perceived that Britain could overhaul Holland given policies appropriate to encouraging industrialisation, regardless of the Dutch initial lead in capital accumulation and command of the carrying trade. The respective positions and trends of the two economies were to have an important bearing upon their colonial economic policies in South East Asia.

Britain and the Netherlands had pressed hard upon the heels of Portugal and Spain in pursuit of the coveted wealth of South East Asia, and both the northern powers had been active in the region by the end of the sixteenth century. The Dutch at this time succeeded in wresting and securing a

clearly predominant position in the maritime region south of the Philippines. Their capture of Djakarta in 1619 marked an important step in the conquest of the Indonesian archipelago, a process which, however, took three centuries thereafter and was never actually completed.<sup>2</sup> Britain abandoned for the time being the seemingly unequal and futile struggle and retired to digest the Indian subcontinent though after final expulsion from Bantam in north-west Java in 1684 the British kept toe-holds at Benkulen and other points on the west coast of Sumatra.

Between the close of the seventeenth century and the opening of the nineteenth, major shifts affected the relative positions of the Netherlands, Great Britain, and the principalities of the Malay maritime crescent. It is impossible to do more than summarise these here.<sup>3</sup> In the first place, the major indigenous economic and political powers were progressively undermined and fragmented. Whereas at the outset the European powers had had, by and large, to fit into a pre-existing network and system of trade, by the beginning of the nineteenth century it was impossible to overlook the emergence, and gradual reinforcement to the western advantage, of overall unequal economic relations.<sup>4</sup> Whole regions, once flourishing, were ruined; local merchants once prominent in international trade were reduced to petty trading and piracy; and the assiduous farmers of Java became, in effect, rack-rented tenants of the Dutch while their local handicrafts and manufactures withered before European competition and discrimination.

Secondly, we should note the relative economic decline of the Netherlands in the course of the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup> There were many factors at work in this process: the archaic prestige of trade at the expense of industrial entrepreneurship; the bankruptcy and corruption of the East India Company; and unfortunate involvement in wars. However strong attachment to free trade at home, the Dutch had sedulously pursued exclusivist and mercantilist policies in the East Indies, recognising the superior quality as well as quantity of manufactured exports available to their European trade rivals. The East Indian monopoly, while far from complete, had been an important prop of the Dutch East India Company, and through it of the Dutch economy. By the Treaty of Paris in 1784, however, Holland was punished for participation in the American War of Independence by being forced to throw its East Indian possessions open to free trade—something obviously of especial advantage to Great Britain, then in triumphant economic ascendancy. With the decay of its trade, the Dutch East India Company was inexorably driven back into exploiting its territorial acquisitions on Java for the feudalistic (precapitalistic) cultivation of such crops as coffee and sugar.

Further misfortunes were to overwhelm the Netherlands in the half-century spanning the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century: humiliation in the Napoleonic Wars; final collapse of their East India Company; secession of the industrialised Southern Provinces (Belgium); British occupation of the Netherlands East Indies under the egregious

Raffles; and a long, savage and debilitating war to resubjugate Java in the face of determined local opposition (1825-30). One ought also to include in this catalogue the steady accretion and penetration of British economic power both generally and regionally.

Thirdly, the rise of Britain to global industrial supremacy naturally had major repercussions and ramifications in the Malay world. Technological ingenuity, luck, the euphoria and self-confidence of an *imperium* on the make, naval superiority, possession of the Indian subcontinent, insulation from inadvertant Continental embroilment: all these and other factors, some seemingly predestined, others disconcertingly capricious, played their part. While Holland floundered and France languished; while America, Germany and Japan put their own houses in order; Britain confidently strode the oceans. The Malay world felt the impact in a series of steps. In 1786 a British settlement was established on the island of Penang. In 1819 Raffles, peeved at eviction from Java by a diplomacy he considered insufficiently cognizant of realities, wheedled the island of Singapore from its rightful heirs and proceeded to found a spectacularly successful entrepot which in fact became the commercial metropolis of South East Asia and an essential link in much of the rest of Asia's international trade.

The Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 formalised the changed circumstances. In effect, it partitioned the Malay world south of the Sulu Sea into a Dutch sphere of influence and a British. Britain evacuated Sumatra and in return Holland pulled out of the historically important port of Malacca on the west coast of the Malayan peninsula, and recognised Britain's right to Singapore. A few minor anomalies notwithstanding (the boundary between British and Dutch Borneo was not finally fixed until 1912),<sup>6</sup> the Treaty granted to Britain all that is now Malaysia and Singapore, and to Holland all that is now Indonesia. Of great significance was the article aimed at the exclusion of third powers: no part of the region was to be "... at any time transferred to any other power. In case of the said possessions being abandoned by one of the present Contracting Parties, the right of occupation thereof shall immediately pass to the other". Britain's trade with China was growing rapidly, and—apart altogether from the intrinsic economic interest of South East Asia—it was absolutely vital for the British Empire overall that the sea routes between China on the one hand and India and Europe on the other be kept open. It followed that it was in the British interest to find a *modus vivendi* with a restored Dutch power in the key Malay region commanding the sea routes. Conversely, Holland, tottering economically after a couple of centuries of greatness, had need of support and approval. It was, of course, an uneasy partnership, much given to stress and strain.

For roughly fifty years after conclusion of the Treaty of 1824 the two European powers went their separate ways in exploitation of their respective spheres of influence. Britain, in the heyday of her industrial

growth and leadership, required but free trade to capitalise upon the region. From the Straits Settlements of Penang, Malacca and Singapore, Britain could take advantage of any economic opportunity going. Holland, on the other hand, bankrupt and industrially backward, perforce had to pursue monopolist and mercantilist policies culminating as far as the East Indies were concerned in the Consignment and Cultivation systems.<sup>7</sup> Unable to compete with British goods and British shipping, and lacking the capital to open up Indonesia in a capitalist fashion, Holland logically resorted to a strategy of which the most important components were: one, a semi-state trading company (the NHM) to which a virtual monopoly of all the trade of the archipelago that could be controlled was entrusted; two, a jealous protection of the East Indies market for Dutch goods; and, three, turning the labour of the Javanese into capital by forcing them to grow commercial crops for the NHM to export and realise in the commodity markets of Holland. It was thus hoped to restore the Dutch mercantile marine, build up industry in Holland, and restore the fortunes and social capital of the metropolis on the sweated slavery of the Javanese peasantry. Outside Java, during this period, the Dutch were content to maintain the status quo by the exclusion of foreign power and influence. Britain, for her part, naturally favoured Holland in any situation threatening to bring one of the more dynamic and thrusting new industrial and would-be imperial powers, such as Germany or the United States, into the comfortably partitioned Malay world.

By the end of the third quarter of the nineteenth century, however, drastic changes had become inevitable. Imperialism had reached a new stage in its development. Competition for colonies and outlets for foreign investment, for markets, and for access to raw materials, was intensifying among the growing number of industrial and industrialising powers. Britain and Holland, dominating a region peculiarly suited to many of the new demands that were arising or accelerating (tin, rubber, petroleum, for instance), could no longer rest on traditional laurels. The result was the so-called 'forward movement'. The aim was to establish *de facto* and well as *de jure* territorial control throughout the region in order to prevent other powers entering and to secure effective disposal of the land and other real resources. By a series of steps after signing of the Pangkor Engagement in 1874, Britain moved into the Malay states of the peninsula and in effect took over their administration in favour of western, and specifically British, economic interests (though assigning an important subsidiary role to the Chinese). Control was not accomplished unchallenged: from the Perak War of 1875-76 to the Trengganu Rebellion of 1928, Malay resistance to alien occupation sporadically flared in armed resistance.

For Holland, a smaller military power in the first place, the task of subjugating far-flung and extensive Outer Islands was a much more arduous one, necessitating prolonged and bloody campaigns, culminating

in the bitterly fought Achinese War (officially dated 1873-1903, but the Achinese never in fact surrendered).<sup>8</sup> The Achinese War is of great interest for a number of reasons. In the first place, Aceh, a traditionally proud, independent and commercial state, had at first been excluded from the 1824 Treaty in recognition of its status and claims. Secondly, the long and ruthless war waged by Holland foreshadowed in a remarkable way those later waged by the United States against the peoples of South East Asia;<sup>9</sup> in particular, we may note one of the earliest examples of 'counter-insurgency' scholarship in the role played by the Dutch scholar of Islam, Snouck Hurgronje.<sup>10</sup> Finally, the rising power of Japan enters the picture: Japan's victories over Russia in the 1904-05 war so impressed Achinese leaders that they tried to make secret contact with Japanese representatives in Singapore in order to ask for help in prolonging resistance to harsh Dutch rule (women and children were frequently taken hostage to exert pressure on men in the guerrilla groups).

The last quarter of the nineteenth century and the pre-1914 years of the twentieth marked the high tide of classical European imperialism. Economic 'development', as measured by statistics of production and export of commercial crops and non-renewable real resources, was phenomenal in both Malaya and Indonesia. Evidence is lacking, however, that such 'development' was for the good of either the indigenous peoples or the long-term interests of the local economies, questions into which we cannot on this occasion go. What is of more immediate relevance is to consider the different policies of the British and Dutch as reflecting their economic specifics and the embryo of the new in the womb of the old.

Although the Dutch had ultimately to concede that their statist monopoly system was a failure and a shackle upon further development, their metropolitan and colonial capitalists by themselves were unable to take full advantage of the gradual establishment of free trade in the East Indies after mid-century. The opening up of the archipelago was, therefore, conducted as an international operation, with British, American, German, French, Belgian, Swedish and other capital involved. American participation was particularly significant, US interests early making inroads into the oil industry and plantation rubber. Britain was in a stronger position economically and as a result was able to retain in metropolitan control a greater proportion of Malayan trade and investment. The long-term implications of this distinction are of some interest and importance, for while US influence has, cuckoo-like, now almost completely ousted Dutch from Indonesia, the struggle between declining British imperialism and dominant American is only now being decided in the Malayan peninsula. The other portent of significance for the future was the appearance in the region of Japan as a trading force to be reckoned with.

The First World War acted as a forcing house for developments already evident. It accelerated the relative decline of the old European

colonial powers, such as Britain and Holland, and conversely hastened the development of the new contenders for the rich Malay prize in South East Asia, America and Japan. With 'normal', that is, colonial trading patterns disrupted by the European imperialist war, both the United States and Japan, Pacific powers less affected in industrial and shipping capacity by the conflict and in particular less embarrassed economically by military interruption of the Atlantic and Euro-Asian sea routes, significantly increased their share of the trade of the region. It was an economic advance never more than partially turned back by reassertion of Anglo-Dutch primacy at the conclusion of hostilities. A new pattern of struggle for influence emerged. It was a more complex one than previously. Holland and Britain were to fight a desperate rearguard action while the US and Japan waged aggressive and confident economic warfare. Most significant of all, however, for the long term was the emergence and consolidation of nationalist forces looking to a post-imperial future—forces, be it at once conceded, varying enormously in potential, seriousness, level of political consciousness, and degree of true mass base.

The Netherlands and Great Britain had had, by the inter-war period, over three hundred years rivalry and uneasy partnership in the Malay world. Even in face of the determined threat of the rising imperialisms of Japan and America it was hard for the two older powers fully to cooperate in self-defence. For instance, when the British, fearful of falling rubber prices (for the metropolitan economy depended to a remarkable degree upon Malaya's rubber proceeds for viability) instituted the Stevenson restriction scheme in 1922, Dutch planters and Indonesian smallholders alike rushed to plant up additional acres in anticipation of rising prices. Naturally, whatever the short-term benefits to the Netherlands East Indies, it was ultimately suicidal. When, then, commodity prices really plummeted in the aftermath of the American crash, England and Holland were forced into coordinating their economic defences, not only in rubber but in other commodities, notably tin, as well. Anglo-Dutch control over vital industrial inputs such as tin and rubber did not, of course, go unnoticed in the United States, the major consumer of both. Indeed, American anger at what they regarded as deliberate attempts to hold them to ransom and exclude them from the international economy formed a powerful incentive in US war-time planning for the shape of the post-war international economic system.<sup>11</sup>

Anglo-Dutch cooperation against the United States was paralleled by their actions, less coordinated this time but similar in intention and effect, directed against Japan's trading competitiveness made her an alarming threat; Japanese goods were not only cheaper, an important consideration as local incomes shrank with the contraction of the export sector in the inter-war depression, but increasingly of as good quality as the European and American equivalents, and backed up by superior and more eager sales and servicing facilities. Moreover, neither the old

colonial powers nor America, already involved in Indonesian oil and well aware of its potential, could overlook the almost uncanny correspondence between Japan's raw material needs and South East Asia's resources. Slighting it may have been to the pride of Holland and Britain, but they perforce had to recognise that, while they could take parallel unilateral steps to exclude or reduce Japanese exports to their colonies, they could not, by themselves, cope with the overall challenge Japan posed to their regional hegemony. It was the United States which had to undertake the broad diplomatic initiative to accommodate, restrain, or, in the final analysis, militarily block Japan.

The Second World War virtually completed what the First had begun. The set-backs suffered by Holland and Britain were this time much more sensational, radical and irreversible. Not only were the two old colonial powers now to all intents and purposes at the mercy of the United States, whose economic and military 'aid' sustained them both at home and in their dependencies, they were also now faced with nationalist movements incomparably strengthened by the twin experiences of an economic depression the colonial authorities had been powerless to avert and an occupation they had been equally powerless to prevent. Japan, for the time being, was out of the picture, and it was the United States that completely dominated the region in a way that no single power had ever before done so, with the possible fleeting exception of Japan for a few months in 1942 and 1943 (though this was an illusory dominance dependent for consolidation upon British collapse in Europe and US acceptance of a solo Japanese sphere of influence in South East Asia).

Granted that China was 'lost' to the 'free world', a working assumption US policy-makers had realistically to incorporate in their thinking from the end of the war, the question was where the frontier of American empire in Asia was to run if Japan was to be assimilated and the wealth of South East Asia (essential to Japan and attractive to the States) secured. Numerous considerations pointed to Vietnam and Korea as the key locations. With these firmly controlled, Washington might move to optimise the profit to be extracted from the conjuncture of South East Asia and Japan and unchallenged US hegemony over the whole area. The hegemony did not, in the event, go unchallenged of course, but it is outside the scope of this paper to deal with developments in the Philippines and mainland South East Asia where indigenous social revolutionary forces contested the American right to treat the region as a neo-colony.

Obviously, American tactics within the framework of broad regional strategy were flexible. This may be clearly illustrated in the case of Malaya and Indonesia. France, Britain and Holland had acted in complete concert throughout the war when it came to the threat of a possible US move to displace them under guise of some 'anti-colonial' subterfuge. Washington came to terms with this obduracy which, in fact, mirrored the desperate objective economic need of the senile old metropolises for their lucrative colonies. As far as Malaya was concerned,

American leaders left the job of reoccupation to Britain, whose armed forces, Special Branch and administrators showed abundant capacity to carry it out, with ruthless efficiency.<sup>12</sup> Indonesia presented greater problems. The nationalist movement was stronger and, temporarily at least, more homogeneous. Dutch power, despite US military and economic aid and despite a savage and blood-thirsty style of campaigning reminiscent of the Achinese war,<sup>13</sup> proved incapable of restoring 'order' and 'stability' that is a good climate for investment, nor did it hold out any promise of so doing for the foreseeable future. Moreover, Dutch barbarities which were widely reported by the world's press were, ironical though it may now seem, a source of embarrassment to Washington. When, therefore, the Indonesian nationalist leadership proved by its actions to be anti-communist, pliable, and prepared to accommodate American business interests, the US quickly switched tactic and, by threat of economic sanctions, drove Holland to the negotiating table.<sup>14</sup> The Americans were not unappreciative of the fact that any prolongation of armed confrontation, regardless of the apprehensive pliability of the nationalist elite, would inevitably redound to the benefit of the true social revolutionary forces operating in Indonesian society.

This is no place for a detailed economic history of the post-war period in the Malay crescent.<sup>15</sup> Rather I should like to conclude with a discussion of the major shifts discernible during this period and prospective for the next decade or so. Five strands may be detected: first, the decline of the British stake in the region and reduction of the British military presence to a mere token force; second, the virtual elimination of the Dutch stake and Dutch influence after four centuries; third, the rise of the United States to clear predominance; fourth, the emerging challenge of Japan; and, fifth, the surge of social revolutionary forces in the region destined eventually to sweep all imperialisms out and restore political and economic autonomy. With this last should be bracketed the immense prestige of China and the shining example of the Indochinese peoples' struggle.

Malaysia and Singapore are, let there be no misunderstanding, still very important to Great Britain. British interests are deeply embedded and entrenched in the economics of both states, and the hand of the old colonial power can still be sensed in administration at several levels and in several directions. Foreign companies own a combined rubber acreage in Malaysia greater in area than the entire state of Negri Sembilan, and over 80 per cent of this is still in British hands. British interests still account for the lion's share of the 65 per cent of the Malaysian tin industry in foreign hands. But the writing has long been on the wall, and the unilateral British decision to 'float' the pound sterling in June 1972 provoked an angry reaction in hitherto compliant Kuala Lumpur. Finance Minister Tan Siew Sin said: "Malaysia has been kicked out of the Sterling Area... the Malaysian Government takes the view that it is free to act in a manner

which is in the best interest of Malaysia." Specifically, he announced that Malaysia would now use the US dollar rather than sterling as their intervention currency for supporting the value of the Malaysian dollar. Malaysian foreign currency reserves, up to the present banked in London and an important prop of the British economy (actually the main support of British economic recovery after the war) now seem peripatetic. Naturally, as we shall see, it is the United States and Japan that are picking up the economic slack.

Corresponding to these economic changes there are military ones. Over the past five years successive British governments have had to adjust to realities and run-down military commitments 'East of Suez'. Clinging to the imperial illusion, Whitehall participates still in the 'defence' of Malaysia in conjunction with units from Australia and New Zealand and the Malaysian armed forces. Highly-trained British Special Forces can be flown out at short notice to take part in 'counter-insurgency' operations, their speciality. The Royal Marine Commando exercise off the west coast of Malaysia in November 1971 was intended to serve as a warning to MCP (Malayan Communist Party) guerrillas increasingly active in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia that Britain was not yet completely a 'toothless bulldog'. Nevertheless, the future clearly lies elsewhere. From 1966-67 onwards, that is, almost simultaneously with news of the British intention to pull out, the US has stepped up its military aid to Malaysia—aid in the form of funds—training for Malaysian personnel in the United States, and the supply of equipment. US and US puppet troops have, of course, long used the world-infamous facilities of the Jungle Tracking School in Johore. American 'experts' such as the notorious Professor Samuel Huntington, hot from such 'triumphs' as the urbanisation of South Vietnam, are now pressing their attentions on Kuala Lumpur, while an insidious invasion of US personnel in a variety of forms, including the academic, lays the foundations for transformation of Malaysia from a British post-colony to an American neo-colony.<sup>16</sup>

Assimilation of Singapore to the pattern of US neo-colonialism is further advanced than in Malaysia. Singapore acts as executive, expert, clerical and servicing HQ for the regional oil industry, and goes out of its way to make the island attractive to US investment, offering substantial inducements and promising wage rates rising less slowly than those of rivals such as Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan (or indeed falling). Singapore cashed in on the Vietnamese war at an early stage, and is deeply implicated in the guilt. The leadership of the island republic are well aware of their vulnerability, a mainly-Chinese enclave in the predominantly Malay world that surrounds them. The Five-Power Defence arrangement, involving them with Malaysia, Britain, Australia and New Zealand, does not carry much, if any, conviction. Malaysia has refused Singapore training facilities. Lee Kuan Yew's strategy has, therefore, three other legs: one, creation of a large, well-trained Singaporean military modelled on that of Israel, significantly, already in comparison with

population one of the largest in the world; two, good relations with the United States, including endorsement of its Indochina policies, with the Seventh Fleet, the huge Thai air bases, and American military power in general in mind; and, three, totalitarian internal control through a fascist-like network of 'community' organisations backed up by a ruthlessly efficient secret police, known as the Special Branch, and British-trained. In all this, he has the enthusiastic, if tactically muted, support of the United States. British influence has been steadily dwindling as a result, though by no means negligible as yet. Nor is it likely to become so as long as the UK is such a major participant in the local economy.

It is difficult to think of an example of a metropolitan power being so totally eclipsed in a former colony as is the case with the Netherlands and Indonesia. Since the generals' coup of 1965-66 there has, it is true, been a tentative, and so far relatively unfruitful, rapprochement including reciprocal Head of State visits and trade talks.<sup>17</sup> The steps by which Dutch economic power and political influence were squeezed out between American pressure and Sukarnoist populism (dependent upon chauvinism and rhetorical leftism) need not detain us here.<sup>18</sup> The interesting thing is the variety and flexibility of the means expended by Washington in pursuit of hegemony in the Indonesian archipelago—an area of utmost sensitivity strategically as well as of great economic attractiveness. Building upon a pre-war investment base, the Americans were quick to proffer 'aid' to Sukarno in order to bind him to the 'free world' cause, ignoring his anti-imperialist bluster as long as he allowed foreign investment and trade to develop satisfactorily. As the logic of his political position nudged Sukarno towards 'anti-imperialist' actions such as the take-over of Dutch enterprises and confrontation with Holland over West Irian, Washington toyed with armed invasion in support of some much more 'reliable' and orthodox pro-western groups involved in an anti-Sukarno revolt in the oil-rich island of Sumatra; the revolt, however, quickly collapsed of inanition. But the very collapse opened up other opportunities, vigorously followed up by the US. In the first place, the banker, economist, civil servant and 'democratic socialist' 'modernisers', thwarted in their revolt, took refuge in hospitable countries such as the United States, where they were educated for their eventual return to Djakarta; this was accomplished in not much longer time than it takes to obtain a US doctorate in economics or political science. In the second place, US tactics inside pre-coup Indonesia now concentrated on the armed forces, and in particular on the top right-wing leadership of the Army.<sup>19</sup> Working with these materials, the US was in a position to turn the events of 1965-66, ignoring for the moment the question of the degree of American proximate causal responsibility for the Suharto coup, to maximum advantage.

By 1966, then, the United States had edged skilfully into a commanding position throughout the Malay crescent. The use to which this has been put can only be suggested here, for this is no place for a statis-

tical presentation. Obviously there are two conceptually distinguishable poles, the economic and the military, but in practice the two concerns entangle, merge and coincide, for what the US seeks to ensure are 'secure' countries from the international capitalist point of view. In that perspective, what appear at first glance as separate activities are all ultimately part of the overall concern. A Malaysian academic trained in political science at Harvard or Berkeley is as much a part of the 'defence of the free world' as an Indonesian general blessed with special military training at one of the elite camps in the United States. Similarly, American 'aid' personnel and 'experts', such as those who wrote the Indonesian investment laws and economic plans, are in the end simply part of the same outfit as dedicated gook-killers, bloodied in Indochina, who may now be posted as counter-insurgency 'advisers' in Indonesia. Carrying the analysis a step further, these layers are but essential infrastructure, the cost being borne by the US taxpayer, for the benefit of 'free world'—and particularly US or US-dominated multi-national business.

The broad picture that emerges is of American predominance in foreign investment in Indonesia and in the regional off-shore oil industry, and of a growing relative share for US interests in Malaysia<sup>20</sup> and Singapore. Militarily, too, America, albeit unobtrusively, increasingly makes the running: the neo-colonial regimes in Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Djakarta are under no illusions as to where their ultimate protection against internal disaffection and social revolution currently lies. There is, of course, no credible external threat to their security except that associated with internal antagonisms among the three. Washington is, however, pursuing 'Asianisation' in order to placate domestic political pressures. As far as the Malay world is concerned this has a number of aspects. First, it means encouraging the military potential of ASEAN (the Association of South East Asian Nations—presently consisting of the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia). Second, Washington urges regional bilateralism, for instance Indonesian training for Cambodian troops and the provision of Indonesian counter-insurgency experts to advise the beleaguered Cambodian army of the Phnom Penh clique. Cambodian troops also train at the Jungle Tracking School in Johore, Malaysia. Third, it means ultimate recognition of the fact that 'Asianisation' must entail a growing Japanese responsibility for regional 'defence', that is, suppression of social revolution.

This brings us to the burning issue of the military and economic resurgence of Japan. Clearly, 'Asianisation' cannot work, even as a short term resort, unless the economic and industrial might of Japan is harnessed. Conversely, the corollary of 'spreading Japanese investment throughout the old 'Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere' is a Japanese military presence. Imperialism and militarism are indivisible. To that extent, US and Japanese requirements mesh. But the story is, of course, much more complex. In the first place, Tokyo can, and does, utilize its

knowledge of American military need to extort economic concessions beyond those Washington would otherwise make. For instance, US-dominated oil giants are now having to let Japan come in on their South East Asian leases, the original purposes of which were two-fold; one, to guarantee to America the maximum oil-potential acreage for the energy-short future; and two, to exclude Japan as much as possible from South East Asian oil, so that its oil needs would continue to be met by US-controlled and high price Middle Eastern oil. The pattern of give and take is bound to be duplicated in the years ahead. The giant cannot expect to lie down and lick his wounds without the bastard son waxing stronger at his expense.

In the second place, both Tokyo and Washington are plainly conscious of the need to go easy on re-introducing Japan as a military power in East and South East Asia. Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia all suffered, to varying degrees, from Japanese occupation, and even Japanese businessmen have to be wary of local hostility. Nevertheless over the last two or three years the tried and tested technique of 'leaking' rumours, then denying them, and subsequently admitting that there is something in them after all, has been applied to this problem. People, both locally in South East Asia and internationally, are being conditioned to accept the inevitable—an overall Japanese responsibility for regional 'security', that is, maintenance of neo-colonialism. A foretaste of the difficulties in store is afforded by immediate concerted and sharp reaction on the part of the three powers concerned (Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia) to the suggestion, frequently mooted in the past but now peremptorily urged, that Japan should 'participate' in the defence of the Malacca Strait, the Japanese oil jugular. Furthermore, nobody can ignore the pronounced 'counter-insurgency' slant of the Japanese remilitarisation programme; it has been alleged that Japanese military personnel have already been introduced to frontline experience in the Bolovens plateaux of Laos,<sup>22</sup> while South Korean military personnel are now paving the way for the Japanese in Indonesia.

Such contradictions and obstacles notwithstanding, the two great imperialisms in the Pacific really have no option but to continue pursuing the elusive and in the long run unobtainable objective of halting social revolution in South East Asia in the interests of their own limitless requirements for raw materials, markets and investment outlets. The resolution of the intra-imperialist and revolution-reaction contradictions in South East Asia is bound to dominate the next decade, for, in the words of a leading Laotian revolutionary, this is the region where the "... contradictions of our epoch are concentrated, where an unprecedented violent revolutionary storm is breaking loose and shattering the weakest link in the imperialist chain, provoking very deep revolutionary eddies, paving the way for the liberation of hundreds of oppressed and exploited millions."<sup>22</sup>

And so we conclude, as we must, with the wave of the future, the

revolutionary liberation struggles of the people. American leaders were never in any doubt about the real threat of China: they talked of Chinese 'aggression' and 'expansionism', but that was for the gullible public; in reality, as they well knew, it was the example of China that posed the greatest danger to their hegemony in the whole Asian hemisphere. The example continues to exert immense influence throughout the region, while, in addition, the revolutionary struggles of the Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, and Korean peoples point the way for all the peoples of 'free world' Asia to follow.

It might be thought that the Malay crescent, about which we have been speaking, forms one of the uncharacteristically stable belts in the region, especially since the overthrow of Sukarno and instatement of a 'reliable' strong man in Indonesia. Such an impression is very misleading. From the northern tips of Sumatra and Kedah to the easternmost reaches of Irian Barat the people are stirring and social-revolution is in the air. In Malaysia, a resurgent MCP is patiently building a trans-communal mass political base and training cadres for revolutionary armed struggle. The controlled panic of the Kuala Lumpur clique is shown by their actions in reactivating many of the procedures of the previous 'Emergency'. Whole divisions in Sarawak (East Malaysia) now have 'parallel hierarchies', with government forces ostensibly in charge by day and when actual armed security personnel are *in situ*, but the guerrilla effectively in command at other times. In West Malaysia, the guerrillas have seeped south right down into the jungles of Johore. The government begs for American investment, but in truth anything thus achieved simply delays the inevitable in a society where feudal oppression, landlessness and rural poverty seek only the correct political brokerage to tie up with urban unemployment, slum squalor and the dissatisfaction of the 'over-educated' to generate a revolutionary explosion.

Nor is Singapore secure. The casual visitor or the resident insulated from realities may have the impression of a model city state. But the dissatisfactions are only just below the day-to-day surface, and might erupt at any time. Secret police, suppressed labour organisations, long-term political prisoners, falling real wages, and an ostentatious luxury on the part of the local and foreign elite (with the Americans increasingly to the fore) spell ultimate collapse for Lee Kuan Yew's PAP (People's Action Party).

It is fitting that we should end with Indonesia. Indonesia is the core of South East Asia, accounting for half the population, nearly half the area, and probably a good deal more than half the commercially attractive non-renewable resources. The obscene satisfaction and self-congratulation indulged in by the US with the slaughter of 'communists' in the winter of 1965-66 ought to be tempered with sober realisation of what is to be. He who lives by the sword, perishes by the sword. The harvest of hate fused to a profound national regeneration and revulsion at four hundred and fifty years of subjection to successive 'spheres of

influence' guarantees to the Indonesian peoples a proud and honourable role in the coming armageddon between imperialism and the embattled and heroic masses of South East Asia. In the mountains and jungles of Kalimantan, Sumatra, Irian Barat, Sulawesi and Java the vanguard prepares. South East Asia will no longer be the object of history. Its peoples will shortly resume their historical destiny and 'spheres of influence' will become a nightmare of the past.

<sup>1</sup> Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations* (numerous editions), Book II, Chapter V; Book I, Chapter IX; Book V, Chapter II; Smith's pioneering study is still worth serious attention for its insights into the inter-relations governing domestic capital investment, the rate of profit domestically, overseas trade and foreign investment.

<sup>2</sup> See G J Resink, *Indonesia's History Between the Myths*, The Hague, 1968.

<sup>3</sup> Assuming among readers some acquaintance with at least the principal works on modern European economic history including the on-going Fontana series, I restrict myself to drawing attention to the following useful reference works on South East Asian history: D G E Hall, *A History of South East Asia*, Third edition, London, 1968; D J Steinberg (ed.), *In Search of Southeast Asia*, London, 1971; D J M Tate, *The Making of Modern South-East Asia*, Vol I, "The European Conquest", London, 1971: There is, as yet, no satisfactory economic history of South East Asia.

<sup>4</sup> J C Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society*, The Hague, 1955; M A P Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago*. The Hague, 1962.

<sup>5</sup> For a useful summary see G R Boxer, "The Dutch Economic Decline" in Carlo M Cipolla (ed.): *The Economic Decline of Empires*, London, 1970.

<sup>6</sup> The extraordinary imperialist activities in Borneo may be approached through two orthodox bourgeois texts: K G Tregonning, *A History of Modern Sabah, 1881-1963*, Kuala Lumpur, 1965; Steven Runciman, *The White Rajahs: A History of Sarawak from 1841 to 1946*, Cambridge, 1960.

<sup>7</sup> See Clive Day, *The Dutch in Java*, new edition, London, 1966; J S Furnivall, *Netherlands India*, Cambridge, 1944; M Caldwell, *Indonesia*, London, 1968.

<sup>8</sup> Dutch official and military histories, while of course apologetics, nevertheless often yield invaluable information to the perceptive reader; see, for instance, E S de Klerck, *History of the Netherlands East Indies*, Rotterdam, 1938. Indonesian resistance to the Dutch continued throughout the colonial period—see, for instance, the interesting work by Sartono Kartodirdjo, *The Peasants, Revolt of Banten in 1888*, The Hague, 1966.

<sup>9</sup> Including coastal blockade and reconcentration of population.

<sup>10</sup> See W F Wertheim, "Counter-insurgency research", *Drie-Kwart Eeuw Geleden*, paper prepared for a conference of the Netherlands Sociological and Anthropological Association, April, 1972; cf. the following unconsciously (?) ominous judgement made by Tate (see footnote 3 above): "The epic resistance of the Achinese created a great stir in the world of Islam at the time and became a great source of inspiration to future Indonesian nationalists. This prolonged resistance was no doubt the result of the great bravery and devotion to the cause of faith and freedom that inspired the Achinese. It was also due in part to Dutch ignorance of the country and its people and their inability to assess how much control was necessary to be effective . . .", *op. cit.*, pp 233-234.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example G Kolko, *The Politics of War*, London, 1969, pp 246 et seq.

<sup>12</sup> A good history and analysis of the British re-occupation and the so-called "Emergency" remains to be written, though some relevant work is now in progress.

- <sup>13</sup> See Jan Pluvier, "Dutch War Crimes in Indonesia", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol II, no 2, 1972.
- <sup>14</sup> As Benedict Anderson has recently shown, the conservatism of the leadership of the Indonesian nationalist movement (despite anti-imperialist and "socialist" rhetoric), its over-riding fear of social revolution, drove it inevitably into collaborationist postures; see *Java in a Time of Revolution*, London, 1972.
- <sup>15</sup> I have tried to outline elimination of Dutch influence and establishment of American dominance in Indonesia in my article "Oil and Imperialism in East Asia", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol I, no 3, 1971 (also available from the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation as a pamphlet). For a brief review of growing US influence in Malaysia see Ron Witton, "Malaysia: Changing Masters", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol II, no 2, 1972. The situation in Singapore is discussed in a jejune but (therefore?) very revealing way in Helen Hughes and You Poh Seng (ed.), *Foreign Investment and Industrialisation in Singapore*, Canberra, 1969; see especially chapters 7 and 8. A work of major importance is that of Iain Buchanan, *Singapore in Southeast Asia*, London, 1972.
- <sup>16</sup> See Anon., "Hunting with Huntingdon", *Dissent*, Melbourne, winter 1971-72.
- <sup>17</sup> The February-March 1972 talks of the Indonesian-Dutch Joint Economic Commission (established in 1968 for annual talks) yielded only an agreement to sign the minutes, and the chairman of the Dutch side, Dr van Oorschot, told newsmen afterwards that talks on trade had not yet yielded satisfactory results—see *Indonesian News*, London 1972.
- <sup>18</sup> I refer to my article cited in footnote 15 above, and to an essay in M Selden and E Friedman (ed.), *Imperialism in Asia*, Pantheon, New York.
- <sup>19</sup> The story is a complex one, and by no means yet fully understood far less documented satisfactorily; nevertheless, it is clear that faction contradictions inside the Army and between the Army and other wings of the service gave the US invaluable leverage; see W F Wertheim, "Suharto and the Untung Coup: The missing link?", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol I, no 2, 1971, and Ernst Utrecht, "The Indonesian Army as an Instrument of Repression", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol II, no 1, 1972.
- <sup>20</sup> It should perhaps be noted that Britain has clung on to something of a predominant position in the north Bornean states of Eastern Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak) and Brunei. Portuguese Timor, of course, remains an archaic anomaly in the region.
- <sup>21</sup> See Phoumi Vongvichit, *Laos and the Victorious Struggle of the Lao People against US neo-colonialism*, Neo Lao Haksat editions, 1969, p 85. This excellent book should be read by everyone with any kind of claim to a serious interest in Asia.
- <sup>22</sup> Vongvichit, *op. cit.*, p 167.

*On Joan Robinson's Criticism of Marx*

IN an earlier article, "How Not to Study Marx", (*Social Scientist*, September 1972) I had assessed Marx as the theoretician of the revolutionary proletariat. It is, according to me, wrong to place him, along with Marshall and Keynes, among the erudite scholars of political economy, as Joan Robinson has done in her lecture entitled "Marx, Marshall and Keynes". Mrs Robinson in her reply says :

Whatever else he may have been, Marx was a scholar of political economy. He started from a philosophical position and then found it necessary to study political economy and in doing so he made great original contributions to the subject.

She charges me with being "not interested in political economy", "not wanting to take the trouble to understand it" and so forth.

I may inform her that, though not a professional economist, though not equipped with that adequate knowledge of the subject which would enable me to have a dialogue with a world-renowned economist like her, I am deeply interested in political economy and want to understand it, as every serious Marxist should. My quarrel with her is on the basic question : what is political economy ? Is it the science which teaches

the bourgeoisie how the capitalist system works, and how the crises which engulf it from time to time can be overcome? Or is it the science which helps the working class to understand how capitalism works in such a way that it limps from crisis to crisis, and how it can be replaced by a new, socialist system if only the working class organises itself and leads all other oppressed classes in a militant people's army headed by a vanguard which is skilful enough to defeat the counter-revolutionary measures of the class enemy?

The role assigned to themselves by bourgeois political economists from Adam Smith and Ricardo down to Keynes is to explain how capitalism works and can be made to work. It is of great significance that the last of these, Keynes, arose at the very time when the bourgeoisie required a brilliant political economist to tell them how to get out of the deepest economic crisis in the history of capitalism.

Everyone of these eminent bourgeois political economists—from Adam Smith and Ricardo to Keynes—has made great "original contributions" to the science. Mrs Robinson seems to bracket Marx with them, because he, too, made "great original contributions". That is why, as was pointed out in my earlier article, she in her lecture "Marx, Marshall and Keynes" assessed him to be as brilliant and wise, but as erroneous on some points as these bourgeois intellectuals. It was this bracketing of Marx with the bourgeois scholars of political economy that I was objecting to.

I have no quarrel with Mrs Robinson on her assessment that Marx was an "erudite scholar of political economy" and that he made "great original contributions" to the science. I, however, disagree that Marx's "original contributions" are to be bracketed with those of Adam Smith, Ricardo, Marshall, Keynes and so on. For, although they talked of political economy as Marx did, although many of the basic laws of economy as propounded by them are the same as Marx's, their science of political economy is basically different from, even opposed to, Marx's.

Marx as the theoretician of the revolutionary proletariat was elaborating the laws of proletarian revolution, teaching the working class and its revolutionary class allies how to overthrow capitalism, while the bourgeois political economists were propounding the laws in accordance with which the bourgeoisie can make the capitalist system work and save it from crisis. Each of them was studying the laws of political economy in the interests of the class which he represented. Marx's "original contributions" were to the political economy of proletarian revolution while those of Adam Smith, Ricardo and so on were to that of the completion of bourgeois revolution. As for Keynes, he was trying to salvage capitalism from ruin.

### *An Integrated Theory*

Marx began, Mrs Robinson points out, as a philosopher and ended as an economist. She seems to attach no importance to the fact that

Marx was not only a philosopher and an economist, but a master of almost every field of the social sciences, as well as the brilliant strategist and tactician of the great popular movements of his time—movements which, he was confident, would overthrow the capitalist system and usher in a new socialist society. As Lenin pointed out in his brief and illuminating article on Marx, written for a Russian encyclopaedia, teachings of Karl Marx begin with dialectical materialism, go through the materialist conception of history to the most valuable contributions to political economy and end up with the theory of the strategy and tactics of the struggle for socialism.

Furthermore, each one of these faces of Marx—the dialectician; the philosophical materialist; the originator of the theory of historical materialism (which, in fact, is a comprehensive guide for every single field of social sciences); the erudite scholar of political economy as recognised by Mrs Robinson herself; the brilliant organiser and leader of revolutionary movements who, in that capacity, elaborated the laws of socialist revolution, as well as the appropriate strategy and tactics to be pursued for leading that revolution—is fully integrated in one person and one theory.

The basis for this integrated personality with an integrated theoretical outlook was laid when the young Marx, at the age of twentyseven, wrote the famous *Theses on Feuerbach* which ended with :

The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point however is to *change* it.<sup>1</sup>

Marx undoubtedly went over from his original philosophical position to the study of political economy, as Mrs Robinson points out. But, long before he made his well-known research into economic data and wrote his *magnum opus*, *Capital*, he became the great leader of the international working class. What made Marx famous in revolutionary circles first was his active participation in the European revolutionary movements of the 1840s and the 50s—movements which made him and his close comrades-in-arms (the most brilliant of whom was his collaborator in theoretical studies, Engels) flee their native lands, face persecution and penury as hunted emigres, but who clubbed themselves together as the general staff of an emerging international army of the revolution.

The passionately-written *Communist Manifesto*, the joint product of Marx and Engels, which began with "A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism", and ended with "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite !", contains within it the quintessence of Marx as the theoretician of the revolutionary proletariat. Mrs Robinson, like many other non-Marxist scholars, may be inclined to dismiss the *Communist Manifesto* as an 'agitational tract', having no theoretical value. I would, however, like to draw their attention to the "great original contribution" to political economy which that brilliant summary of the theoretical basis of Communism contains.

Two decades before the first volume of *Capital* had come out and several years before Marx had started working at the British Museum to produce that work, the authors of the *Communist Manifesto* explained in brief the emergence, growth and final end of capitalist society. Let me quote the relevant passages :

At a certain stage in the development of these means of production and of exchange, the conditions under which feudal society produced and exchanged, the feudal organisation of agriculture and manufacturing industry, in one word, the feudal relations of property became no longer compatible with the already-developed productive forces; they became so many fetters. They had to be burst asunder; they were burst asunder.

Into their place stepped free competition, accompanied by a social and political constitution adapted to it, and by the economical and political sway of the bourgeois class.<sup>2</sup>

Thus far about the inevitability of feudal or precapitalist society being replaced by capitalism. There is no use wailing over the misery caused to the people who are being ruined in the process, as our Gandhians did and still do. Similarly, after capitalist society has been born, the same process repeats itself. The *Manifesto* goes on :

Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. For many a decade past the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeois and of its rule.<sup>3</sup>

And then follows a description of "...the commercial crises that by their periodical return put on its trial, each time more threateningly, the existence of the entire bourgeois society"<sup>4</sup>—a description which is brief but contains the seeds of that basic theoretical study of the laws of political economy which was the task undertaken by Marx when he worked on *Capital*. The periodical crises which continuously break out but are temporarily resolved "by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented",<sup>5</sup> are just mentioned in the *Manifesto* but are explained in detail with all the sophistications of an erudite scholar of political economy in *Capital*. The revolutionary leader in Marx had seen its essence even before he had started the painstaking study of the mass of material which he subsequently did at the British Museum.

The *Manifesto*, however, does not envisage the automatic destruction of capitalism. The founders of historical materialism knew very well that a mere repetition, on a larger and larger scale, of *commercial crises* would not lead to the end of capitalist system. *The subjective factor of a class that would end the system* was also necessary. The point, however, is

that the growth of capitalism and its recurring crises create and organise that class. The *Manifesto* points out :

Not only has the bourgeois forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons—the modern working class—the proletarians.<sup>6</sup>

Then follows an illuminating description of how the proletariat, organised as a class in the very process of production, “goes through various stages of development” which take them to the position of the leader of all classes and strata which are oppressed by capitalism. Hence the conclusion :

The essential condition for the existence, and for the sway of the bourgeois class, is the formation and augmentation of capital; the condition for capital is wage labour. Wage labour rests exclusively on competition between the labourers. The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the labourers due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of modern industry therefore cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. *What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, is its own grave-diggers. Its fall and victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable*<sup>7</sup> (Emphasis added).

It was in this process of “the grave-diggers of capitalism” organising themselves as a class and leading all other oppressed classes that they produced their own ‘erudite scholar of political economy’, Karl Marx, just as the bourgeoisie at the time of its origin and growth produced its own Adam Smith and Ricardo. In the subsequent phases when capitalism underwent a significant change in its character—change from the competitive to the monopoly capitalism—the proletariat produced its theoretician in Lenin, the author of *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. The bourgeoisie too produced its Keynes when the most widespread, all-embracing and deepest crisis of its economy broke out in 1929. It is this fundamental difference between the two brands of the science of political economy—bourgeois science as represented by a host of scholars from Adam Smith and Ricardo to Keynes and the proletarian science represented by Marx and Lenin—that Mrs Robinson blurs when she brackets together “Marx, Marshall and Keynes”.

Let us now deal with some of the points of criticism against Marx’s *Capital*, made by Mrs Robinson in her article.<sup>8</sup>

### *Value and Price*

In Volume I of *Capital* Marx states dogmatically that commodities exchange at prices corresponding to their labour values and in Volume III he points out that, under competitive capitalism, the rate of profit tends to be equalised between different lines of production.

This is a virtual repetition of the argument in her earlier lecture that there is a contradiction between the theory propounded in Volume I and

facts as analysed in Volume III. She has no doubt given up the earlier thesis that Volume II and Volume III are not Marx's works. But she still speaks of "the difference between the systems in Volume I and Volume III". If only she had cared to study Volume I (not to speak of Volume III) carefully, she would have seen that the subject matter of the three volumes is different from one another.

The first volume deals with "the process of production", which "is complete as soon as the means of production have been converted into commodities whose value therefore exceeds that of their component parts, and, therefore, contains the capital originally advanced plus the surplus value."<sup>9</sup>

"These commodities", Marx adds, "must then be thrown into circulation. They must be sold, their value realised in money, this money afresh converted into capital, and so over and over again. This circular movement, in which the same phases are continually gone through in succession, forms the circulation of capital . . . . The total analysis of the process will be found in Volume II".<sup>10</sup>

In other words, the scope of Volume I is the *process of production*, while that of Volume II is *circulation of capital*. As for Volume III, Marx explains :

The capitalist who produces surplus value, i.e., who extracts unpaid labour directly from the labourers, and fixes it in commodities, is, indeed, the first appropriator, but by no means the ultimate owner, of this surplus value. He has to share it with capitalists, with land-owners etc., who fulfil other functions in the conversion of social production. Surplus value therefore splits up into various parts. Its fragments fall to various categories of persons and take various forms, independent one of the other, such as profit, interest, merchants' profit, rent etc. It is only in Volume III that we take in hand these modified forms of surplus value.

The same idea is repeated by Marx at the beginning of Volume II and Volume III. Mrs Robinson appears to ignore the difference in scope of the three volumes and, therefore, repeatedly finds 'discrepancies' between certain formulations made in the three volumes. She forgets that every formulation made in Volumes I and II is with reference to a particular point of the whole circular movement—the *process of production* alone in Volume I and the *process of circulation* alone in Volume II—while the scope of Volume III is the *circular movement as a whole, embracing production and circulation*.

Marx's famous formula given in the opening page of Volume II is  $M - C \dots P \dots C^1 - M^1$ , where  $M - C$  represents transformation of money into commodities,  $P$  represents the process of production and  $C^1 - M^1$  the transformation of the commodity, together with the surplus value created in the process of production, into money, added by surplus value. As for the dots, they represent the interval of time taken (either normally or in the abnormal times of crisis) : (a) between the transformation of money

into commodities and the actual process of productively consuming the commodities, and (b) between the process of production and the transformation of the commodities together with the surplus value, into money with added value.

The scope of Volume I is P alone; while Volume II deals with M — C and C<sup>1</sup>—M<sup>1</sup>. It is Volume III which deals with the whole circle. The impact of the interruption of time between purchase and production, and between production and sale, is of no significance for Volumes I and II while it is significant for Volume III. It is, therefore, totally incorrect to compare conclusions arrived at in Volume I and Volume III, as Mrs Robinson does here in relation to value and price as well as on some other points.

This, however, is not all. Marx never states—not to speak of 'stating dogmatically'—that commodities exchange at prices corresponding to their labour values. He, in fact, states the very opposite.

*The possibility of quantitative incongruity between price and magnitude of value, or the deviation of the former from the latter, is inherent in the price form itself.* This is no defect, but, on the contrary, admirably adapts the price form by a mode of production whose inherent laws impose themselves only as the means of apparently lawless irregularities that compensate one another<sup>12</sup> (Emphasis added).

Far from being dogmatic, Marx draws attention to a visible fact: Objects that in themselves are not commodities, such as conscience, honour etc. are capable of being offered for sale by their holders and of thus acquiring their price, through the form of commodities. Hence an object may have a price without having value. The price in that case is imaginary, like certain quantities in mathematics. On the other hand, the imaginary price form may sometimes conceal either a direct or indirect real value relation; for instance, the price of uncultivated land, which is without value, because no human labour has been incorporated in it.<sup>13</sup>

The original contribution of Marx to the science of political economy is that, beginning with the primary unit or cell of capitalist society, the individual commodity, and examining the essence of value in the commodity, he was able to explain the reality behind the appearance of various phenomena like money, price, profit, interest, rent and so on. He unravelled the complex process through which the reality of value is concealed behind the appearance of price; the reality of surplus value behind the appearance of profit, interest, rent and so on; the reality of a basic social contradiction behind the appearance of periodical crises. Failing to see this incongruity between reality and appearance in capitalist society analysed by Marx, Mrs Robinson tries to find incongruity in the various formulations of Marx. In this particular case of value and price, she actually asserts the very opposite of what Marx himself has clearly and unmistakably stated.

*Real Wages*

Mrs Robinson is critical of Marx also on the question of real wages. Here again, she finds a 'discrepancy' between Volume I and Volume III. "In Volume I" she says, "commodity wages are expected to remain fairly constant over the future . . . . In Volume III the argument is quite different. There are limits to the possible rise of rate of exploitation and it seems to be predicted that it will be more or less constant over a long future. When the rate of exploitation is constant while output per worker is rising, the wage in terms of commodities is rising." To which she adds, "in advanced capitalist countries, the prediction of Volume III has turned out to be 'correct'".

One would have thought it unnecessary to deal with Mrs Robinson's criticism of Marx on the question of real wages, since she agrees that Marx's conclusion in Volume III is correct. It is, however, necessary to point out that, even in Volume I, Marx does not "expect" commodity wages to remain fairly constant. The scope of the volume being the examination of the *process of production* abstracted from the *process of circulation*, as has been pointed out above, he has to make certain assumptions for purposes of theoretical clarity. It is the logical implications of reproduction on an extended scale that are being analysed in this volume.

The result of the analysis made is *the law of accumulation*. The operation of this law in real life, with all the other factors relevant to the analysis of *the process of capitalist production as a whole*, is the subject matter of Volume III. It is significant that, even in his formulation of the general law of capitalist accumulation, Marx adds the caution :

Like all other laws it is modified in its working by many circumstances, the analysis of which does not concern us here.<sup>14</sup>

As in the case of the theory of value, so in that of real wages, therefore, Mrs Robinson confuses certain assumptions made in the course of the analysis of the process of production abstracted from the process of circulation, with the conclusion arrived at when the integral process—production plus circulation plus division among various sections of the owning classes—is analysed.

It, however, appears that Mrs Robinson is more critical of "the Marxists with one or two exceptions such as Kalecky and Sweezy" than of Marx himself. She says, "until quite recently they have continued to base their analysis on Volume I and were asserting that the workers are experiencing growing misery. This was both an error in analysis and a denial of observable facts."

It is not within the purview of this article to examine the stand taken by various Marxists. What we are concerned with is whether Marx was guilty of any error in this regard. The essence of what he has stated was summed up in my earlier article which said :

The actual amount of wages received by the workers of a country or a particular group of countries may at times and in places increase

when capitalism develops. It is also possible (as we see today, although Marx did not clearly foresee it in his day) that, even in hitherto-backward countries like those of Asia and Africa, the standard of living of sections of the common people registers rises when these countries become part of capitalist society.

I, therefore, would not subscribe to the theory according to which the Marxian law of accumulation means *progressive deterioration* in the living conditions of *all* sections of the working class. One cannot preclude the possibility, in fact see the reality, of sections of the working class being able to improve their living standards. This is particularly true of the working class in the advanced capitalist countries in relation to the underdeveloped or developing countries, and, within the latter, between the organised industrial workers and the rural masses.

These realities are not contrary to what Marx has written even in Volume I. On the other hand, Marx explicitly states, the *rise of wages* therefore is confined within limits that not only leave intact the foundations of the capitalist system but also secure its reproduction on a progressive scale. The law of capitalist accumulation, metamorphosed by economists into a pretended law of Nature, in reality merely states that *the very nature of accumulation excludes every diminution in the degree of exploitation of labour, and every rise, in the price of the labour, which would seriously imperil the continued reproduction, on an ever-enlarging scale, of the capitalistic relation*. It may not be otherwise in a mode of production in which the labourer exists to satisfy the needs of self-expansion of existing values, instead of, on the contrary, material wealth existing to satisfy the needs of development on the part of the labourer (Emphasis added).<sup>15</sup>

That was why in the earlier article, I went on :

None of these developments however negates *the basic reality that even while there is such an improvement in the standard of life of sections of the working class, this improvement is more than counterbalanced by the still larger accumulation of capital in the hands of a narrow group of monopolies*. The growth of a handful of monopolist families in every advanced capitalist country is a fact which a world-renowned economist like Mrs Robinson cannot deny. Nor can she deny that what she calls the improvement in the standard of living of the workers is a trifle when compared with the unprecedented tightening of the hold of a handful of monopolists in every capitalist country. *It is this gulf between the ever-expanding capital in the hands of an ever-narrowing circle of monopolists on the one hand and the impoverishment of an ever-widening circle of the common people that is relevant to the discussion of the capital-labour relations analysed by Marx*.

### *Falling Rate of Profit*

The third point on which Mrs Robinson subjects Marx's analysis to criticism concerns the falling rate of profit. Here, however, her quarrel

appears to be with "some little bits of algebra (employed by Marx) which were not always correct". Subjecting to criticism Marx's formula of constant capital, variable capital and surplus capital, she points out,

$\frac{s}{c+v}$  is not the rate of profit of capital. The capitalists get profits on the value of the stock of capital that each commands. For instance, in a textile factory  $v+s$  is embodied in the net output of piece goods but stock of capital is embodied in a building equipped with machinery and in the stock of cotton and yarn in existence at any moment. When  $c$  is the annual means of production consumed, let us write the  $C$  for the stock.

An so on till she comes to the conclusion, the capitalists could not care less about labour values. What they are interested in is the money provided on the money cost of investment. Thus instead of  $C+V$ , the labour value of the stock of capital, we should write  $K$ , the stock of capital at market prices, and instead of  $\frac{s}{v}$  we should write  $\frac{P}{W}$ , the ratio of net profit to the wage bill. The capitalists' rate of profit is  $\frac{P}{K}$ .

Here again, it seems, Mrs Robinson is so obsessed with Volume I, so full of misunderstanding about the scope of Volume I and Volume III, that she fails to note that the "little bits of algebra" used by Marx were not 'incorrect' at all. For, Marx's *Capital*, Volume III has the following passage :

In its assumed capacity of offspring of the aggregate advanced capital, surplus value takes the converted form of *profit*. Hence, a certain value is capital when it is invested with a view to producing profit, or, there is the profit because a certain value was employed as capital. Suppose profit is  $p$ . Then the formula  $C=c+v+s = k+s$  turns into the formula  $C = k+p$ , or the *value of a commodity = cost price + profit*.

The profit, such as it is represented here, is thus the same as surplus value, only in a mystifying form that is nonetheless a necessary outgrowth of the capitalist mode of production. The genesis of the mutation of values that occurs in the course of the production process, must be transferred from the variable portion of the capital to the total, because there is no apparent distinction between constant and variable capital in the assumed formation of the cost price. Because at one pole the price of labour power assumed the transmuted form of wages, surplus value appears at the opposite pole in the transmuted form of profit.

There is obviously no basic difference between what Mrs Robinson states and the above passage from Marx's *Capital*.

A few words are possibly necessary to point out exactly what Marx meant when he elaborated the theory of the falling rate of profit. The very title of Part 3 of Volume III is "The law of the *tendency* of the rate

of profit to fall". The use of the word "tendency" indicates that there is no continuous fall without zig-zags.

Part 3 is itself divided into three chapters: 1) The law as such; 2) Counteracting influences; and 3) Exposition of the internal contradictions of the law.

A study of the three chapters together would show that the "general law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall" is not absolute but is riven with internal contradictions which in fact reflect the internal contradictions of the capitalist system. It is these internal contradictions—their growth, accentuation, the inevitability of crises flowing from them, the resolution of these crises and once again the growth, accentuation, crises, resolution and so on—that constitute the essence of the Marxist theory of capitalism and its crises. The crises that repeatedly arise, Marx points out, "are always but momentary and forcible solutions of the existing contradictions. They are violent eruptions which *for a time* restore the disturbed equilibrium".

Surprisingly enough, the crux of Mrs Robinson's criticism of Marx is not that Marx's theories of value, of real wages and of the falling rate of profit are incorrect. On these questions of economic analysis, she agrees that the "discrepancies" are not of much importance. A theoretical economist though she is, Mrs Robinson's serious criticism of Marx is political. Let us quote her criticism in full:

*Marx was appealing to the industrial proletariat in the advanced western world to overthrow capitalism. They have not done so up till now. It would be more useful to study why the revolution that Marx expected has not occurred for 120 years than repeat quotations showing that it is still to come. To say that capitalism is doomed is a truism. As history rolls, all systems are doomed to change and disappear—the question is what is to be done meanwhile.*

*The Chinese paid a heavy price for believing the orthodox Marxist dogma that the revolution can be made only by the industrial working class. Mao succeeded because he rejected dogma and followed his own experience that the peasantry could make the revolution. China, certainly, is a special case. But every country is a special case. In particular, Europe in the nineteenth century which Marx studied was itself a special case. To apply his method of argument in another country and at another period of history requires more than quotations from what he wrote (Emphasis added).*

Quotations from Marx are, of course, no substitute for the concrete study of the concrete reality in one's own country. I, however, beg to point out that Marx's works are a sure guide to the concrete study of the concrete reality in one's own country, provided one is a master of Marx's works as well as the concrete conditions in one's own country. Mastering both was the merit of Lenin who, in contrast to Kautsky and other 'heroes' of the Second International, did not hesitate to make bold innovations in theory as well as in practice, thus making constructive contributions to the science of Marxism.

That was also the contribution made by Lenin's followers, the most brilliant of whom are Stalin, Mao, and so on (though some grave errors have undoubtedly been committed in the process). Mrs Robinson's outlook seems to indicate that she has no use for mastering the work of Marx which, according to her, have become outmoded since they were applicable only to nineteenth century Europe. I disagree and desire to make the following points :

First, Marx's call was not to the industrial proletariat in the advanced western world alone, though the particular background against which he carried on his practical activities made him closer to the industrial proletariat of advanced capitalist countries. In the very *Communist Manifesto* which has become the most rousing call given by the vanguard of the revolutionary movement headed by Marx, we find the following declaration of policy :

The Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things;

In all these movements they bring to the forefront, as the leading question in each, the property question, no matter what its degree of development at the time;

Finally, they labour everywhere for the union and agreement of the democratic parties of all countries.

Note the words *support every revolutionary movement*, and *union and agreement of the democratic parties of all countries*.

Secondly, Marx and Engels themselves were fully conscious of the importance of the peasant question. "The whole thing in Germany", Marx said, "will depend on the possibility of backing the proletarian revolution by some second edition of the peasant war." Engels too in his practical activity after Marx's death paid a good deal of attention to the peasant question in several individual countries whose leaders sought his advice. It was on the basis of these teachings of Marx and Engels that Lenin developed his tactics for Russia—the tactics of the revolutionary alliance of the working class and peasantry. After the Russian revolution and the formation of the Communist International, Lenin applied this same theory to the international movement, particularly to the movement in the countries under colonial, semi-colonial and backward economies dominated by foreign rulers and native feudalists.

Thirdly, it was this Marxist-Leninist heritage that the Chinese Communist Party led by Mao took over and applied to their country. In doing this, however, neither the Chinese Communist Party nor Mao counterposed the peasant revolution to its proletarian leadership.

The crux of the successful Chinese revolution consists in the facts that (a) the revolutionary proletariat and other revolutionary classes and strata of Chinese society were influenced by the Socialist Revolution of Russia; (b) the proletariat came into militant action and created the first generation of the Chinese Communists, and when the reactionary Kuomintang tried to suppress them, they spread out into the countryside;

(c) the "spark that set the prairie fire" was, in fact, the vanguard militant workers who had to leave their places of work and who mobilised the peasantry in militant action; (d) it was the militant proletarian cadres spreading out into the countryside and rousing the peasant millions that formed the basis of the first Chinese Soviets and the Red Army; (e) even after the formation of liberated areas, Mao insisted, the proletariat has to lead the peasant militants.

There is, therefore, neither the original "dogma" nor its subsequent "rejection" by the Chinese Communist Party, as alleged by Mrs Robinson. The success of the revolution in China is due precisely to the fact that its Communist Party correctly applied to the specific conditions of China the universal theory of Marxism-Leninism—the theory of the proletariat leading all the oppressed and exploited classes.

Finally, it is not as if no revolution has taken place in the advanced countries. The Paris Commune of 1871; the German Revolution of 1918; the revolutionary outbreaks in several European countries at the end of the First World War; the world-wide movement of the working class with the central slogan, "Hands off Russia", when the imperialists unleashed the interventionist war—all these indicate the extent to which the proletariat of advanced capitalist countries came into militant action. That they did not succeed in overthrowing the bourgeois regime as their comrades in Russia did is due to the fact that the very revolutionary working class movement got into its ranks strong elements of the ideology of class collaboration, the ideology against which Lenin had to fight a life-long battle.

Today too, as had been pointed out in my earlier article, it is "the right and left opportunist mistakes leading to disunity in the international proletarian camp" that hamper the development of the revolutionary proletarian movements in the advanced capitalist countries and the revolutionary democratic movements in the underdeveloped countries.

A total underestimation of the enormous progress made by the international revolutionary movement since Marx wrote his *Communist Manifesto* (the 125th year of whose publication is being celebrated this year) and of the role played by Marx's *Capital*—correctly called by Engels "The Bible of the Working Class"—in creating the international army of the world revolutions headed by the working class is the basic failing of the critique of Marx made by Mrs Robinson. While society has changed a lot since the days of Marx, thus making many of his conclusions inadequate for our present purpose, we are of the view that there is no substance in the criticisms made by Mrs Robinson either in her earlier lecture or in the present article. Marx's works in general, the *Communist Manifesto* and *Capital* in particular, are of immense value even today as a guide to the understanding of, and action in changing, present-day society in every country if only they are intelligently used in the concrete conditions of the country concerned.

- <sup>1</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol I, Moscow, 1969, p 15.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p 113.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p 113.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p 113.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p 114.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p 114.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p 119.
- <sup>8</sup> Joan Robinson, "Marxian Economics Today", *Social Scientist*, No 8, 1973.
- <sup>9</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol I, Moscow, 1954, p 564.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p 564.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p 564.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p 102.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p 102.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p 644.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p 620, 621.
- <sup>16</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol III, Moscow, p 36.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p 244.

SHARAD PATIL

## *Problem of Slavery in Ancient India*

*“Manusa manusan eva dasa-bhavana bhunjate;  
vadha-bandha-nirodhena karayanti diva-nisam.  
Atmanas ca api janati yad duhkhani vadha-bandhane.”*

“Human beings, enslaved by human beings,  
are exploited by them ;  
Tortured, shackled, and incarcerated,  
are forced to work day and night,  
Though they (who do this) themselves know,  
the agony evoked by torture and chains !”

—Mahabharata, XII 262 38-39.

DASAS and Sudras were the first ever creators of wealth, in the sense of surplus product, in ancient India. The great Indian civilisation, which their ceaseless, back-breaking toil spread over nearly three millenniums has raised and nourished, had in return fashioned and perpetuated the shackles of their slavery and servitude. State power had terrorised them into smouldering submission, religion had preached to them the preordained birthright of servitude, and philosophy had revealed to them the evanescence and unreality of ‘this’ world of travail and the eternality and reality of ‘that’ world of bliss.

Resurrected Brahminic Hinduism declared through the mouths of *Puranas* that Kshatriyas had ceased to exist with the advent of the Sudra Nandas (Nanda-antam Kshatriya-Kulam), replacing thereby the four-caste system with the two-caste system.<sup>1</sup> *Vishnu Dharma-sutra* compiled between the third and first centuries BC, coined for the first time the term 'untouchable' (asprasya), thereby legalising the pariah status of a vast section of Sudra toilers.<sup>2</sup> The mediaeval legal pandits, Raghunandana of Bengal (fifteenth century AD) and Nagabhatta of Maharashtra (eighteenth century AD), laid down that only two castes exist in the Kali age, namely, Brahmins and Sudras.<sup>3</sup>

The present day industrial state terrorises the modern Sudras of the factories and farms into rebellious submission with advanced weaponry of violence, luring them at the same time with the mirage of democratic socialism. Religion in the persons of the Jagad-guru Sankaracharya of Puri and Guruji Golwalkar of the RSS<sup>3a</sup> defends the divine origin and the resulting eternality of the caste society and the justifiability of the degradation of the Hindu woman. The Sankaracharya evidently re-echoes the following passage of *Satapatha Bramana* : '... Woman, the Sudra, the dog, and the black bird (the crow) are untruth; he should not look at them'.<sup>4</sup> The Sudra-hating Monistic Idealism of the first Sankaracharya<sup>5</sup> has virtually become the state philosophy of the Indian republic.

With the hour of the final liberation of the Sudras of industrial society drawing near, the problem of the origin of the slavery of their Dasa-Sudra progenitors presses for solution. Glorification of the good and slurring over or minimisation of the evil in the nation's past was the weapon with which our revivalist scholars countered the attempts of the British imperialists at national humiliation during the period of freedom struggle. Slavery in ancient India received the same treatment at the hands of these scholars. Being one of the foremost of our traditional scholars and also a follower of Tilak, P V Kane's view represents this trend the best :

Slavery was probably not much in evidence in India in the 4th century B C, or the treatment of slaves in India was so good that a foreign observer like Megasthenes accustomed to the treatment of slaves in Greece thought that there was no slavery.<sup>6</sup>

Tilak was, as were the other leaders of the national movement, a political representative of the Indian industrial class. His biographer N C Kelkar records that Tilak started a ginning factory at Latur in Maharashtra in about 1889.<sup>7</sup> Tilak hailed from a Khot landlord family and he wrote a series of articles in defence of Khot landlordism in 1899.<sup>8</sup> These semi-feudal affiliations made him a staunch champion of Hindu orthodoxy and led him to offer stiff opposition to the Age of Consent Bill which intended to prohibit child marriage by raising the minimum marriageable age limit of girls.<sup>9</sup> Hence, it is no wonder that the political philosophy of these national leaders and their scholarly followers attempted to present exploita-

tion in ancient India as exceptionally humane with the avowed intention of endowing the industrialist class with the heritage of this unique national tradition of 'exploitation without tears'.

If the upper class intelligentsia of the rising Indian industrialists unfurled the anti-imperialist banner of neo-Hinduistic revivalism for the right of national exploitation, it was but inevitable that the non-Brahmin intellectuals of the regional and rural bourgeois elements raised the banner of anti-Brahminic social reform for the right of exploiting their own nationalities and castes. The non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra took shape in the last half of the nineteenth century primarily under the impact of the violent outbreaks of the Sudra peasantry against the religious oppression of the Brahmins and against their pauperisation by usurer landlords mainly drawn from the Brahmin, Marwari and Gujarati non-agricultural castes and nationalities.<sup>10</sup>

That is why these two movements, though uterine in their genesis, developed under their own inherent contradictions and hence clashed with each other. The former was anti-imperialist but pro-feudal, while the latter was pro-British or pro-western but anti-feudal; but both relied on the British rulers to gain their objectives. Nevertheless, both being primarily impelled by the germinating seeds of capitalist development sown unwillingly by the British themselves, the need of their mutual conflict passed into their urge for national unity in the third decade of this century. The most influential leaders of the non-Brahmin movement joined Congress and led big masses of Maharashtrian peasantry into the great satyagraha of 1930.

A similar situation in Kerala is succinctly summed up by E M S Namboodiripad :

... It is, however, a historical fact that the first form in which the peasant masses rose in struggle against feudalism was in the form of caste organisations. In spite of the fact that they had no clear perspective of changing the social order, of breaking the backs of the landlords as a class, of ending the rent system and redistributing lands, the Nayar peasantry rose against the Brahmin *jennmis* (landlords by birth) and the *Ezhava* (an untouchable caste) peasantry against their caste-Hindu oppressors, including the Nayars ...

It has become fashionable for those who consider themselves nationalists to denounce these caste organisations as anti-national and 'reactionary' because they sought the help of the British imperialists in getting their grievances redressed. They, however, forget the main point that in spite of their illusions as to the "progressive democratic character" of the British—an illusion which they shared with the pre-Tilak generation of nationalists, they roused and organised the masses against some aspects of the oppressive social order. . . .

... The peasants who were roused by, and organised in, caste organisations in the early years of the twentieth century were subsequently brought into the fold of the anti-imperialist national move-

ment in the twenties and into the class organisation of the peasantry in the thirties and forties.<sup>11</sup>

The conclusion he draws from the contradictory and complex manner by which the caste-divided people of India struggle towards their objective is bold and far-reaching :

Every progressive popular movement in this caste-ridden part of the world could not but have its edge turned against caste-Hindu domination.<sup>12</sup>

The non-Brahmin movement was founded and initially led by a great Mali, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule (1827-1890). Marathas, another and numerically the biggest peasant proprietor caste of Maharashtra, participated in developing the movement to the fullest extent possible. The leaders of this movement, in its final phase, proved themselves to be but the political representatives of the rising rural bourgeoisie of their own castes, and hence they failed to transform the anti-Brahmin and anti-usurer struggle into a thoroughgoing anti-feudal and anti-capitalist struggle of all castes. That is why when the anti-Brahmin movement by and large came to an end after becoming a part of the national movement, the movement of the untouchables burst forth and developed under the leadership of an illustrious untouchable, Dr B R Ambedkar. Apart from the significant contribution he made to the cause of the uplift of the untouchables, he attempted to end the age-old religious and social oppression of the untouchables by their conversion to the Buddhist religion, and set before them the goal of political liberation by embracing bourgeois republicanism. It is not for nothing that he considered his movement as a continuation of the non-Brahmin movement :

It is well known that there is a non-Brahmin movement in this country which is a political movement of the Shudras. It is also well known that I have been connected with it. . .<sup>13</sup>

The tribute he pays to Phule in the dedication of his book, *Who Were the Shudras*, sums up his own credo :

The greatest Shudra of Modern India who made the lower classes of Hindus conscious of their slavery to the higher classes and who preached the gospel that for India social democracy was more vital than independence from foreign rule.

It is for this reason that the movement of the ex-scheduled castes (neo-Buddhists) finds itself today brought to a standstill at the very place where the non-Brahmin and similar movements were cremated by history.

Nonetheless, Ambedkar was the first Sudra who raised on the eve of independence in 1946 the fundamental question of ancient Indian history, namely, who were the Sudras, and made a serious attempt to answer it. He summed up the result of his investigations as follows :

Two questions are raised in this book : (1) Who were the Shudras ? and (2) How they came to be the fourth Varna of the Indo-Aryan society ? My answers to them are summarised below :

- 1) The Shudras were one of the Aryan communities of the Solar race.
- 2) There was a time when the Aryan society recognised only three Varnas, namely, Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas.
- 3) The Shudras did not form a separate Varna. They ranked as part of the Kshatriya Varna in the Indo-Aryan society.
- 4) There was a continuous feud between the Shudra kings and the Brahmins in which the Brahmins were subjected to many tyrannies and indignities.
- 5) As a result of the hatred towards the Shudras generated by their tyrannies and oppressions, the Brahmins refused to perform the Upanayana of the Shudras.
- 6) Owing to the denial of Upanayana, the Shudras who were Kshatriyas became socially degraded, fell below the rank of the Vaishyas and thus came to form the fourth Varna.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, the Sudras, originally a ruling and exploiting people, were 'tricked' into slavery by the villains of Brahmins by withholding upanayana from them!. It was upanayana which admitted one to Vedic study and membership of an Aryan tribe. The capitalist 'social democracy' permits education (even the Vedic one) to a minority of the modern Sudras and helps a microscopic section of this minority to the full membership of the tribe of capitalist aristocracy. The former is the upanayana and the latter is the *summum bonum* of modern times!

The Dasas and Sudras were supposed to have been autochthonous people who were defeated and subjugated by the invading Aryans. But, the pre-Aryan civilisation to which the Dasas belonged was comparatively a far more advanced civilisation, and it had been flourishing at least for more than one thousand years before the hordes of the pastoral Aryans started entering India in the middle of the second millennium before Christ (B C 1750). Were the Dasas the ruling or servile class of the pre-Aryan Indus state? Archaeology is yet to provide a conclusive answer.

The challenge posed by the contention of the revivalist scholars to Marxist methodology was a basic one. If class society in India did not commence with a social formation based on production carried on mainly by slaves, but relied since its inception on the free labour of Vaisya and later Sudra peasantry, then Marxist methodology becomes inapplicable by and large to Indian conditions.

Dange's was the first attempt to interpret Indian history by Marxist methodology. He tried to prove that India passed from the tribal primitive communistic stage to the slave stage :

A question is raised as to what were the specific features of slavery in India? What role did it play in production?

There are few who would deny altogether the existence of slavery in India. In the face of explicit records stating the kinds of slaves that existed, the rules regarding their liberation and their place in property inheritance, it is difficult for anyone to say that slavery did not

exist.

... It was not the labour slavery of the Roman or Greek type. It was 'domestic slavery'. It only means that agricultural production on large-scale farms owned by slave-owners and worked by gangs of slaves was not the dominant form of production. But, in contrast with this, domestic slavery does not mean that the slaves did 'only 'personal service' to the master in the household. There is enough evidence to show that the slaves were set to production of household manufactures, on farms and even large-scale estates, along with 'free' peasants and even hired labourers. Slave-owners also hired out their slaves for work to bring income for their owners.

Large-scale estates cultivated by slaves and hired servants are generally found near the town-centres and are found to be properties of kings. A few private landlords also are mentioned, some of whom are even pious Brahmins. But agricultural production in the countryside was not carried on mainly by means of slaves. There the free household community led by the *Grihapati* or *Kulapati* cultivated the common land. The employment of slaves on a considerable scale prevailed in the town centres of handicrafts and, to some extent, in the village.

This intertwining of the household community with domestic slavery supplanting other forms is a specific feature of Indian slavery.<sup>15</sup>

He reiterated the definition of Indian slavery and feudalism which he first enunciated in 1949 :

We might say that whereas the four Varna system (*Varnashrama Dharma*) is the juridical-ethical expression of the period of later stages of barbarism and also of slavery and civilisation, the caste system (*Jati-Dharma*) is the expression of the rise and growth of Indian feudalism ...<sup>16</sup>

If a society in which the main producers are free peasants while production by slaves plays only a subsidiary role can be characterised a slave society, then Indian feudal society must receive the same appellation, for the same classes, free peasantry and domestic slaves, existed side by side in the whole of the feudal period, and it was quite widespread right upto A D 1843 :

... this abolition of slavery in India (which was only realised in 1843) has given us some valuable information. The documents prove clearly that slavery was widespread in almost all regions of the country and everyone was of the opinion that it was in accordance with Hindu law and has been in existence since ancient times. The existence of this institution among the Brahmins of Mithila, well known in the middle ages for their knowledge of sacred texts, is confirmed by the documents registering sales and purchases of slaves.<sup>17</sup>

Kosambi makes a valuable survey of slavery during the period ranging from the Delhi Sultanate to the abolition of slavery by the British in 1843 :

"... Firuz indulged in production for himself, with the help of slaves. "The Sultan Firuz was very diligent in providing slaves, and he carried his care so far as to command his great fief-holders and officers to capture slaves wherever they went at war, and to pick out the best for the service of the court... When they were in excess, the Sultan sent them to... all the... feudal dependencies.... Some (slaves) were placed under tradesmen and were taught mechanical arts, so that about 12,000 slaves became artisans (*Kasih*) of various kinds.... The institution (of slavery) took root in the very centre of the land, and the Sultan looked upon its due regulation as one of his incumbent duties.... There was no occupation in which the slaves of Firuz Shah were not employed. None of the Sultan's predecessors had ever collected so many slaves. The late Sultan Alauddin had drawn together about 50,000 slaves, but after him no sultan had directed his attention to raising a body of them until Sultan Firuz adopted the practice....

"Slavery was thus an attempt on the part of the Sultan to become less dependent upon his vassals. The bondsman helped run his private plantations whose produce not only supplied the palace but was also sold in the open market, as were the rugs and fabrics woven by his slave factories. Fifty thousand slaves were guards in royal equipages or palaces. The total number of these imperial slaves (*bandagan-i-khas*) was 80,000.... When we consider that most of the abler previous emperors of Delhi had been slaves, it is clear that this sort of slavery was not essential to the productive mode.... In general, feudal slaves were mostly household servants, for independence from local retainers who might, in a crisis, show loyalty to their own caste or community. For smaller landholders, particularly soldiers pensioned off, the slave was often the heir, actually so adopted, who would care for the age and disabled master during his life time".<sup>18</sup>

Kosambi thinks that slavery increased in the Mughal period and the increase was due to the Mughal policy of breaking the age-old village communes :

Muslim conquest had broken up the village communes, except in form over a small portion of the land, to leave a series of middling landowners.<sup>19</sup>

The second reason he gives is the increase in commodity production.<sup>20</sup> But why was there increase in commodity production? Because there was increase in trade. And why was there increase in trade? Due to increase in commodity production! A fine example of *chakraka* (circular) way of arguing referred to by Indian logic.

As for the first reason, the question naturally arises as to how the Arabs (which term includes all the nations of Islamic Middle East), who followed a religion the organisation of which was formally tribal and who themselves had spilled out of tribal communities, could break up Indian village communities which also had retained tribal vestiges. The task was fated to be accomplished only by the imperial capital of

Great Britain.

The real cause of increase in commodity production was the collection of land revenue in cash instead of in kind which, according to Irfan Habib, came into vogue in the thirteenth century :

The peasant of Northern India or, at least, of the central regions, paid his revenue in cash as early as the 13th century. In the Mughal period the methods of assessment, chiefly used in Hindustan, namely, the *Zabt* and the form of *Nasaq* based upon it, involved the direct statement of the revenue demand in terms of cash. No provision is on record for allowing a commutation of cash into kind in any circumstances. On the other hand, when the methods of crop-sharing and *Kankut*, both of which set the demand in terms of the produce, were used, commutation into cash was permitted at market prices. . . .<sup>21</sup>

But, the Arabs were not the innovators of this system, though their monopoly of foreign trade contributed to its rise. Internal trade was stimulated by the resurgence of foreign trade. R S Sharma observes :

On the whole in the 11th and 12th centuries Northern India witnessed an expansion of commercial activities, which seemed to have declined during the four centuries following the collapse of the Gupta rule. One of the main causes of the increasing internal trade seems to have been the revival of foreign trade . . . .<sup>22</sup>

If trade by itself had been the sole cause of the commutation of land revenue in cash, then the system should have originated in Gupta times itself. The spread and increase in the cultivation of cash crops and the spurt in the caste-based crafts,<sup>23</sup> entrance of Marwari and Gujarati mercantile and money capital in internal and foreign trade, brisk activity in Indian ship-building, all this taking place in the eleventh century, denotes a new and higher stage in feudal production in India.<sup>24</sup> These are the factors taken in their totality that necessitated the commutation of land revenue from kind to cash. R S Sharma gives concrete instances of this important change in the Indian revenue system :

We have, however, a very important piece of evidence from Central India which shows that revenue was assessed in cash and not in kind, as was the case in earlier times in various parts of the country. A record of the early thirteenth century (12.3) informs us that a business document executed apparently by the *Mahamandalika* Pamparaja, probably a feudatory of the Kalacuris of Ratanpur, fixed the revenue of the village Jaipura at 130 Sarahgadama-achus as previously settled and 140 Vijayaraja-tankas. It also states that the revenue of another village was fixed at 150 Vijayaraja-tankas . . . . This need not be attributed to Muslim influence, for the Delhi Sultanate established in 1206 hardly covered this part of the country. On the other hand the existence of the practice under the Sultanate should be taken as a culmination of the process that had begun in North India in the 11th and 12th centuries.<sup>25</sup>

Kosambi attributes the same causes to the heavy percentage of

slaves in Canara and Kerala :

About 1800, North Canara district had an estimated 16,201 slaves against 146,800 free persons (BJ-2-442); South Canara, 47,358 slaves in a total population of 396,672 (BJ-3-2-6); Malabar 16,574 slaves, 106,500 free (BJ-2-362). This included women and children, yet these proportions are unusually high. Slaves also had a wage scale but in Malabar were abominably treated (BJ-2-371). The reason for this brief period of slavery was in part historical and partly the high relative incidence of commodity production at the time and place. Muslim conquest had broken up the village communes, except in form over a small portion of the land, to leave a series of middling landowners . . . .<sup>26</sup>

In spite of his encyclopaedic erudition, Kosambi failed to study the social system of Kerala, which holds the key to the solution not only of the problem of the 'unusually high' proportion of slaves in Kerala, but also of the problem of slavery in ancient India. The problem has been fully dealt with in the body of the book. References to the social system of Kerala are made here only to clear up the point raised by the present discussion. Kerala has remained matrilineal up to recent times. Its basic social unit is the matrilineal joint family called taravad. It is described by Iravati Karve as follows :

... When a *tharwad* becomes too big and splits it generally splits along *thavazhies*. If lands in a distant village need to be looked after by a household living near the lands, then a junior *tharwad* is set up in such a way that a sister or daughter of the old *tharwad*, together with her descendants, is given a new house near the lands. The property is held jointly by the mother *tharwad* and sister *tharwad* unless a definite partition with the consent of all has occurred.<sup>27</sup>

A taravad split up when its members numbered more than a hundred.<sup>28</sup> The land of a taravad began to be partitioned only with the enactment of tenancy laws.<sup>29</sup> Though all property is inherited in the female-line, the taravad property including its land is managed by the eldest male member called Karanaver.<sup>30</sup> *The vast taravad and temple rice lands used to be tilled exclusively by agrestic slaves, domestic slavery being unknown in Kerala. The institution of slavery was not of recent advent and brief duration as Kosambi would like to think; for it was brought into being by the matriarchal or rather its child matrilineal agricultural civilisation of Kerala itself.*<sup>31</sup>

As for commodity production, Gujarat was the most advanced province in trade and cultivation of cash crops throughout the Mughal period :

The most important feature of trade in Western India was the position of Gujarat as a great importer of food-stuffs. It obtained wheat and other foodgrains from Malawā and Ajmer and rice from the Dakhia. Indeed, it provided a market for the produce of so distant a region as Gondwana, while rice was also brought by sea from Malabar. On the other hand, its major exports consisted of cash crops. Of these, cotton was by far the most important. The crop

raised between Surat and Burhanpur (Khandesh) 'supported an extensive trade to Agra'. Cotton and cotton yarn were sent by sea to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea ports and down the coast to Kerala. It was also occasionally exported to Europe. The indigo produced in Gujarat, especially the Sarkhej variety, was exported both to Europe and the Middle East. A large quantity of opium was shipped to Kerala and tobacco to Thatta, Persia and the Red Sea ports. Among re-exports, sugar was frequently sent to Europe, silk to the Middle East and saffron to Malabar.<sup>32</sup>

In spite of being the greatest producer of cash crops and manufactured goods, as well as being the greatest emporium of mediaeval India, the proportion of slaves in Gujarat was negligible, and whatever slaves there were, were of exclusively domestic category.

Dange's identification of Indian slavery with varna system, though ingenious, is not sustainable. Four varnas, according to Dange, were the basic characteristic of the varna system. But, only two varnas, slaves and slave-owners, existed in the North Western frontier countries of Yona and Kamboja in the time of Buddha (*Yona-Kambojesu annesu ca paccantimesu janapadesu dveva vanna—Ayyo ca eva Daso ca*).<sup>33</sup> The sangha-ganas of Buddha's and Panini's times had only two varnas, namely, Kshatriyas and slaves-and-labourers (*dasa-karmakaras*). According to the grammarian Patanjali (on Panini, IV. I. 168), only the Kshatriya masters were entitled to bear the tribal designation, and not only the servile population, but even the Brahmins and traders who resided in these sangha-ganas were beyond the pale of the tribal privileges. Among the Licchavi oligarchs who went to see Buddha, many were of dark colour (*Appakacce Licchavi nila honti nila-vanna nila-alankara, . . .*)<sup>34</sup> Bhaddiya, king of the Sakya oligarchy, was called son of the black Godha.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the two varnas in these oligarchies were not differentiated by skin colour as the four varna system was claimed to have been. No such differentiation existed even among the Vedic Aryans and in the Brahminic chatur-varnya system. A black Angirasa is the composer of the Rig-vedic hymns VIII, 85-87, X. 42-44 and a dark (Asita) Kasyapa is the seer of the Rig-vedic hymns IX.5-24. The heroes and heriones of the two great epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, namely, Rama, Krishna and Draupadi were dark. And lastly, as the Indus state was exclusively peopled by pre-Aryans, no such distinguishing feature as colour (varna) can be attributed to its servile class. Hence, the varna system standing on the exclusive basis of number four and skin colour, cannot be the distinguishing feature of Indian slavery at all.

Finding that dogmatic methodology could not succeed in explaining Indian history, the pendulum swung to the other extreme. The foremost exponent of this other manner of Marxist methodology is the well-known scholar Dr Ram Bilas Sharma. He contends that there was no slave society even in Greece and Rome, and makes the sweeping formulation that mankind as a rule passes directly from the tribal to the feudal

society.

The feudal mode of production is generated and developed within the framework of the old tribal society. It is not generated and developed within the framework of an imaginary society divided between slaves and slave-owners. In the *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels shows how among different tribal communities the transition to feudalism takes place. True, there were many slaves in Athens and Rome. But that does not prove that Athenian and Roman societies were divided between slaves and slave-owners or that these were prefeudal societies. In fact before man can be bought and sold like commodities, the means to buy and sell them—money—should be sufficiently developed, the mode of production should be developed in order to utilise their labour power, there must be a market in which to sell the fruits of their labour, etc. Engels described precisely this kind of economic activity at Athens in connection with the growth of slavery there.<sup>36</sup>

In order to buttress his theory that slave society is an illusion (maya) and feudal society is the only reality, he puts in the mouth of Marx and Engels his own formulation that the main conflict in Greek and Roman societies was not between slaves and slave-owners, but between the poor and the rich of the free sections of these societies :

The main contradiction in this society is still between the rich and the poor Athenians; it is these sections of the pauperised people who drag down with them the whole of the Athenian state.

Things were not materially different in Rome. On March 8, 1855, Marx wrote to Engels: 'A little time ago I went through Roman history (ancient) again up to the Augustan era. The internal history simply resolves itself into the struggle of small versus large landed property, *specifically modified*, of course, by slave conditions.' Here again the main contradiction is between big and small proprietors.<sup>37</sup>

The methodology of Marxist scholars like Ram Bilas Sharma attempts to prove exactly what the bourgeois revivalist scholars had directed all their efforts to accomplish. Was the proportion of slaves in Greek and Roman societies so negligible as R B Sharma makes it out to be? Let us see what Engels himself has to say about it.

... When Athens was at the height of prosperity the total number of free Athenian citizens, women and children included, amounted to about 90,000; the slaves of both sexes numbered 365,000, and the dependents—immigrants and freed slaves—45,000. Thus, for every adult male citizen there were at least eighteen slaves and more than two dependents. The large number of slaves is explained by the fact that many of them worked together in manufactories with large rooms under overseers . . . .<sup>38</sup>

Even before the reforms of Solon (B C 594), slaves outnumbered free Athenians.<sup>39</sup> As for the Romans, their main industry, agriculture, was exclusively worked by slaves.

Agriculture, the decisive branch of production throughout antiquity, now became so more than ever. In Italy, the immense aggregation of estates (*latifundia*) which had covered nearly the whole territory since the end of the republic, had been utilised in two ways: either as pastures, on which the population had been replaced by sheep and oxen the care of which required only a few slaves; or as country estates, on which large-scale horticulture had been carried on with masses of slaves, partly to serve the luxurious needs of the owners and partly for sale in the urban markets . . . .<sup>40</sup>

The main conflict in Athenian society in its final phase, according to Engels, was between slaves and freemen:

The class antagonism on which the social and political institutions (of Athenian society) rested was no longer that between the nobles and the common people, but that between slaves and freemen, dependents and citizens.<sup>41</sup>

One of the greatest modern authorities on ancient Greek history, George Thomson, goes into more details on the problem of slavery in ancient Greece:

Some historians, anxious to present 'the glory that was Greece' in the most favourable light, have discounted the part played by slave labour and even declared that 'Greek society was not a slave society'. In order to test such statements it is enough to turn the pages of Herodotus and Thucydides.

Of the Greek word for 'slave' some were used loosely, but one had a very definite meaning. The word *andrapodon*, 'chattel slave', means literally a 'man-footed' creature, being formed on the analogy of *tetrapoda*, 'four-footed' cattle. Similarly, *andrapodistes* and *andrapodokapetos* meant 'slave-snatcher' and 'slave-dealer' respectively. . . .

The word occurs for the first time in the *Illiad*, where Euneos of Lemnos offers wine in exchange for metals, oxen, hides, and slaves. . . .

The slaves sold at Kyzikos were *andrapoda*. . . . The first Greek city to employ chattel slaves was Chios, where there was a slave market throughout antiquity, and it is noteworthy that as early as 600 B C, the constitution of this island was democratic. About the same time Periandros, tyrant of Corinth, sent 300 young men from Kerkyra, a Corinthian colony, to Sardeis, where they were to be castrated, and serve as eunuchs. A century later we hear, again from Chios, of one Panionios, who made a handsome fortune by procuring good-looking Greek boys, castrating them, and setting them at Epheses and Sardeis. The people of Arisbe, one of the six original cities of Lesbos, were enslaved by their neighbours of Methymna. Some prisoners from Lesbos were employed in chain gangs by Polycrates, tyrant of Samos, on the fortification of the island. A band of emigrants from Samos, who had settled in Crete, were attacked by the inhabitants together with some seamen from Aigina and enslaved. One of the inducements offered to the Persians for subjugating Nassos, which was

then under a democracy, was that the island had a large slave population. When the Persians conquered Ionia the citizens of Samos sailed away to Sicily, where they seized the Greek city of Zankle. This they did with the support of Hippokates, tyrant of Gela, who in return for his assistance took half the slave population, together with the majority of the citizens, for work in his chain gangs. When the Persians invaded Greece, they were under orders to enslave the inhabitants of Eretria and Athens and despatch them to Sousa. They were able to carry out the order in respect of Eretrians, who were eventually settled near the Persian capital; but the Athenians eluded them. . . . It seems that even at this period there already existed in Anatolia large landed estates worked by slave labour; for, when Xerxes entered Phrygia at the head of his army, he was entertained by one Pythios, reputed to be the wealthiest of his subjects, who bestowed on him vast sums in gold and silver, adding that he still had plenty to live on from his farms and slaves.

Following up the victory over Persia, the Athenians captured Eion in Thrace and sold the inhabitants into slavery; then they sailed to Skyros, enslaved the inhabitants, and replaced them with planters from Athens. Meanwhile Gelon, tyrant of Syracuse, had kidnapped the common people of Magara Hyblaia and Euboia, two Greek colonies in Sicily, and sold them for export. In 430 B C, at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, the Athenians captured Argos Amphilo-chikon and sold the inhabitants into slavery. In 427 B C Thebans stormed the neighbouring city of Plataiai, executed 200 of the men and enslaved the women and children. In 421 B C the Athenians captured Torone and Skione. At Torone they despatched the men to Athens and enslaved the women and children, and resettled the territory with planters of Plataiai. In 416 B C they subjugated Melos, massacred the men, enslaved the women and children, and resettled the island with planters from Athens. During the campaign in Sicily an Athenian squadron sailing along the north coast put in at Hykkava, kidnapped the inhabitants, and sold them at Katane. After the rout of the Athenians, not less than 7000 prisoners, Athenians and their allies, were thrown into the quarries, where many of them perished, and the survivors were sold into slavery.<sup>42</sup>

This is the account of the Greeks enslaved by the Greeks. As for alien peoples enslaved by the Athenians, Thomson observes :

We learn from Aristophanes and other Attic sources of his time that the slave population of Athens was drawn from countries as distant as Illyria, Thrace, Scythia, the Caucasus, Cappadocia, Phrygia, Lydia, Caria, Syria, Egypt, and Arabia.<sup>43</sup>

The industries of Athens ran on slave labour and huge profits were made by slave-owners by hiring out their slaves.

The same author (Thucydides) records that in 413 B C over 20,000 slaves deserted to the Spartans, who had occupied Dekeleia, most of

them being manual workers. It may be inferred that they had been employed in the quarries and mines. We know that in this generation Nikios, leader of the ill-fated Sicilian expedition, owned 1000 slaves, whom he hired out for work in the mines at an annual return of about 10 talents. Assuming that he had bought them at an average price of 168 *dr.* per head (a figure which may well be too high, since only the cheapest slaves would be sent to the mines), it may be reckoned that he received an annual return of at least 35 per cent. . . . It was evidently a common thing for those who owned only a few slaves to employ them in this way, receiving from each a return of an obol or more a day. Apart from the mines, the largest concentration we hear of at Athens is the arms factory of Kephalos, who employed 120 slaves.<sup>44</sup>

To what extent agriculture of Athens was dependent on slave labour can be realised from the fact that even a poor peasant owned several slaves.

A generation later we hear of a house in town, two country farms, and a cobbler's shop employing ten or eleven slaves. Large numbers of slaves were employed in domestic service and also in brothels. Glotz has estimated that an ordinary Athenian household might contain from three to twelve slaves. This is no more than a guess, but it is important to note that even the poorer citizens seem to have had one or two slaves. Chremylos, in the *Wealth* of Aristophanes, is a poor peasant, yet he owns several slaves.<sup>45</sup>

Class struggles in ancient societies were not recorded as it is done in modern times—so many strikes, so many man-days lost, so many workers involved, and so forth. In the slave societies of both East and West, slaves were beyond the pale of ordinary law, and their masters held over them the power of life and death. Nevertheless, though the histories of these times were written by the scribes of these masters, they were compelled to record the most serious outbreaks of slaves.

In Sicily the spark which kindled the devastating servile war was struck by a Syrian slave, who simulated the prophetic ecstasy in order to rouse his fellow slaves to arms in the name of the Syrian goddess.<sup>46</sup>

Ancient Egypt, one of the most ancient slave states of the world, saw a mighty uprising of its slaves and other toiling classes.

Towards the end of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt there was a mighty uprising of the lower classes in which the destitute peasantry and craftsman joined forces with the slaves.<sup>47</sup>

Another ancient slave state, China, followed suit.

There were slave uprisings during the course of many centuries in ancient China. A mighty uprising began in the 18th century B.C. Its participants dyed their eyebrows red as a means of identification, and thus the movement came to be known as the Red Eyebrow Rebellion. The rebels were slaves, freemen, craftsmen, fishermen and small traders. Having gained a victory over the regular troops, they

moved on to the capital and occupied it. It was only through supreme effort that the ruling class was able to suppress the uprising, even though the participants were neither sufficiently well-organised nor disciplined.<sup>48</sup>

The leader of the rebellion of Roman slaves, Spartacus, has passed into legend.

Spartacus, a gladiator, organised a plot of gladiators in the city of Capua in 74 B.C. The plot was discovered and only several dozen slaves managed to escape from the city to Mount Vesuvius. This handful of courageous men formed the core of the army of 60,000 men that fought under Spartacus in the south and north of Italy, defeating the armies of the slave-owners. As a result of the joint efforts of all Roman forces, the slave-owners were finally able to defeat the rebels in 71 B.C.<sup>49</sup>

What according to Dange is the characteristic feature of Indian slave society, is taken by R. B. Sharma to be the distinguishing feature of Indian feudalism.

The feudal mode of production is small-scale production in town and countryside. Castes and varnas are the typical features of this society.<sup>50</sup>

He transforms his dogma into a universal truth:

The feudal mode of production matures not within a society of slaves and slave-owners but within the tribe. When the tribes split and reunite, new nationalities are formed, where a new division of labour prevails, and the people are not united by ties of blood kinship as in the tribe. The basic features of feudalism are the same in Europe and India.<sup>51</sup>

Thomson deals with this dogma of small-scale production as follows:

What remains of Ehrenberg's argument? Simply this: The Athenian economy was based on small-scale production, and therefore slave labour cannot have played a large part in it. The fallacy is obvious.

The truth is that, just because they were based on small-scale production, the Greek city-states, having grown up in conformity with the new developments in the productive forces, especially iron-working and coinage, were able, under the democracy, to insinuate slave labour surreptitiously into all branches of production, and so to create the illusion that it was something ordained by nature. It was then that 'slavery seized on production in earnest'. This was the culminating point in the evolution of ancient society.<sup>52</sup>

The only scholar who has gone to the root of the problem of slavery in ancient India, pressing into his service his vast erudition, neglecting no source of information available on that subject, was the late Dr Dev Raj Chanana. The most significant contribution he makes to our understanding of ancient Indian society is as follows:

We have... on the one hand regions (oligarchies) where an entire section of the population is considered as slaves, and, on the other hand, areas (monarchies) where this criterion does not hold.

In the oligarchies... slavery seems to have been, in spite of the insufficient data available, due to birth. The oligarchs possess slaves who must work for them. This fact is confirmed, above all, in agriculture, the principal industry (for commerce is not yet sufficiently developed) where the work is entirely carried out by slaves and servants. We are not contesting the existence of Brahmin villages (as for example among the Sakiyas) mentioned in the texts, nor suggesting that these Brahmin peasants were the slaves of the Sakiyas. We are simply observing that the supply of foodgrains (rice, barley, etc.) to the noble families depended on the slaves who had to cultivate the lands of their masters.<sup>53</sup>

Thus Chanana concludes that slavery in the oligarchies was of the communal form. R S Sharma, basing himself exclusively on the *smṛiti* writers who legislated for those regions of ancient India where the Brahminic four-caste system prevailed, considers the valuable findings of Chanana to be untenable.

Nevertheless the major conclusion of the writer that the practice of regarding a whole section of the population as slaves fits quite well into the oligarchic system is open to question. The brahminical law-givers, who were staunch supporters of the monarchical form of government, laid down in very clear terms that the Sudra population was meant for the service of the three higher varnas.<sup>54</sup>

The institutions of slavery in Kerala and in these ancient oligarchies have points of great similarity, excepting of course that Kerala is matrilineal while these ancient oligarchies were patriarchal. The other similarity between Kerala and these ancient oligarchies is that Brahminical *smṛiti* laws were neither applicable to these oligarchies, nor are they applicable to Kerala. Both social systems, in spite of some important differences, belonged to the non-Brahminical current of this country. Both these currents, the non-Brahminical and the Brahminical, have flown side by side throughout Indian history, clashing, interacting and subsuming each other.

<sup>1</sup> P V Kane, *History of Dharmasastras*, Vol II, P i, pp 381-382.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 172-173.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 381-382; D R Chanana, "The Sanskritist and Indian Society", *Enquiry*, Vol II, No 2, 1965.

<sup>5a</sup> Interview to the Marathi daily *Navakala* dated January 1, 1969.

<sup>4</sup> *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol XLIV, p 446.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol XXXIV, pp 223-229.

<sup>6</sup> P V Kane, *op. cit.*, Vol II, P i; p 183.

<sup>7</sup> N C Kelkar, *Lokamanya Tilak yanche Charitra* (Marathi), pp 237, 394-395.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p 668.

<sup>9</sup> R P Dutt, *India Today*, p 269.

- <sup>10</sup> N C Kelkar, *op. cit.*, pp 77-78; V Pavlov, *The Indian Capitalist Class*, pp 273-275, 299, 304 ff.
- <sup>11</sup> E M S Namboodiripad, *Kerala : Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, pp 115-116.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p 2.
- <sup>13</sup> B R Ambedkar, *Who were the Shudras ?*, p XXI.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp XIV-XV.
- <sup>15</sup> S A Dange, *India : From Primitive Communism to Slavery*, pp XI-XII.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p XVI.
- <sup>17</sup> D R Chanana, *Slavery in Ancient India*, p 3.
- <sup>18</sup> D D Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, pp 348-349.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p 350.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, pp 233-237.
- <sup>22</sup> R S Sharma, *Indian Feudalism : c. 300-1200*, pp 248-249.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 251-253.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 246-247, 249-250, 269.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 258-259.
- <sup>26</sup> D D Kosambi, *op. cit.*, p 350.
- <sup>27</sup> Irawati Karve, *Kinship Organisation in India*, p 366.
- <sup>28</sup> O R Ehrenfels, *Mother-right in India*, p 61.
- <sup>29</sup> Irawati Karve, *op. cit.*, p 11.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p 366.
- <sup>31</sup> Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, Vol II, pp 272-273.
- <sup>32</sup> Irfan Habib, *op. cit.*, pp 73-74.
- <sup>33</sup> J Kashyap, (Ed.), *Majjhima-nikaya-pali*, II 43-1-3.
- <sup>34</sup> J Kashyap, (Ed.), *Vinaya-pitaka, Mahavagga-pali*, VI, 18-30; *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol XXII, p 106.
- <sup>35</sup> J Kashyap (Ed.), *Anguttara-nikaya-pali*, I, 14-6.
- <sup>36</sup> R B Sharma, "Feudalism, Varna, Caste and Nationality", *Marxist Miscellany*, p 188; also his *Bhasa aur Samaja* (Hindi), pp 133, 211-212.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p 119.
- <sup>38</sup> F Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, p 117.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p 112.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p 146.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p 117.
- <sup>42</sup> G Thomson, *Studies in Ancient Greek Society*, Vol II, pp 197-200.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p 200.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p 201.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 201-202.
- <sup>46</sup> J G Frazer, *Adonis Attis Osiris*, Vol I, p 74.
- <sup>47</sup> *An Outline of Social Development*, Part I, p 62.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p 109.
- <sup>50</sup> R B Sharma, *op. cit.*, p 119.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>52</sup> G Thomson, *op. cit.*, Vol II, pp 204-205.
- <sup>53</sup> D R Chanana, *op. cit.*, pp 23, 43-44.
- <sup>54</sup> R S Sharma, *Light on Early Indian Society and Economy*, p 35.

## NOTES

### *Third Pay Commission Report*

THE long-awaited report of the Pay Commission has at last been submitted after three years in April 1973. It is also known that Rs 65 lakhs have been spent in the preparation of this 1500-page document.

The Pay Commission Report has recommended several changes. First, it is stated that the 500 pay scales as existing at present have been telescoped into 80 scales. Secondly, it has been argued that the disparity ratio between the minimum and the maximum pay scales (both post-tax) has been reduced from 15.4 as on January 1, 1970 to 11.8. Thirdly, the Commission has proposed an insurance cover of Rs 5000 for all employees on the payment of Rs 5 per month. Fourthly, the Commission has not raised the ceiling of Rs 3500 and thus, by raising the floor and middle levels has tried to reduce disparities. Fifthly, the Commission while making its proposals for the grant of dearness allowance has introduced an element of progression. Explaining this recommendation, the Report mentions that the existing D A and the three interim reliefs have been merged or absorbed in the new scale. The new scheme of D A provided by the Commission is based on the consumer price index with 1960 as base year. The pay structure recommended is based on 200 points in the index. The new recommendation by the Commission provides a graduated system of D A with every eight point rise in this index (corresponding to ten points in the old index). When the index touches 208, all employees drawing a revised pay upto Rs 900 a month will be eligible for D A; when it rises to 16 points, all employees drawing upto Rs 1600 a month would be covered and when the index rises by 24 points, all employees drawing upto Rs 2250 a month will be covered. This cycle will be repeated. The rate of D A upto Rs 300 a month will be 3.5 per cent of the pay subject to a minimum of Rs 7 and maximum of Rs 10. Above Rs 300, it will be 2.5 per cent of the pay subject to a minimum of Rs 10 and maximum of Rs 20. Sixthly, the Commission has recommended Rs 185 as the minimum basic salary of a Central Government employee.

Professor V R Pillai, a member of the Commission told the *Economic Times* in this connection that "even though the Commission

would have liked to recommend much higher scales for the lower sections of employees, it would not have been possible for the Government to implement such a recommendation owing to its heavy financial implications. The Commission had, therefore, done the next best thing by reducing the gap between the higher and lower salaried brackets of employees. The *Commission had been guided by the socialist policies of the Government*" (Emphasis added).

The question that is most relevant here is : are the recommendations of the Commission based on the socialist policies? It would be relevant to examine the question in some depth. Outlining the philosophy, the Commission mentions that "inclusiveness, comprehensibility and adequacy" are its guiding principles. But these words do not convey much. In this connection, it would be pertinent to examine Table 1.

We have tabulated in Table 1 the scales of main categories of employees upto Junior Class I services. Since the total duration of the nine pay scales included varies between 13 years to 20 years, we have taken the median value of 15 years to determine the salary of a person in a particular scale. When a particular scale ends after 13 or 14 years, it has been assumed that the employee is placed in the next higher scale and his salary has been worked out on that basis. For instance, assuming that a peon is placed in the scale of a daftiri after 13 years, two more increments of the daftiris scale are added. This explains why the salary of a peon after 15 years is determined at Rs 228. In order to study the disparity ratio, it is not enough to take into account the differences in initial salary, but also to study how these differences tend to decrease or increase over time. Consequently, a long term perspective would imply the study of rate of increments in various scales and their impact on disparity ratio. A study of recommended pay scales by the Pay Commission reveals that the percentage increase in basic salary over the minimum initial salary of the scale rises as we proceed from the lower to the higher scales of pay. It is 23.2 per cent in the case of peons, 28.9 per cent in the case of daftiris, 30.0 per cent in the case of artisans (semi-skilled workers), but is 65.0 per cent in the case of SAS accountants, 84.6 per cent in the case of Assistant Engineers, Superintendents and Section Officers and 92.8 per cent in the case of All-India Services. As a consequence, the index of disparity ratio which is 100:378 in the initial salary between these scales will widen to 100:592 after 15 years. An analysis of the Pay Commission's recommendations, therefore, reveals an inverted concept of socialism being used by the Commission, because by granting much higher rates of increment, the Commission widens disparities over time. In a society which professes to move towards socialism, these disparities should narrow down. Keeping this in view the Commission should have provided for much higher rates of increments in the lower scales and it should have urged the government to absorb the increases in their expenditures over a period of 15 years.

The Commission justifying the recommendation of Rs 185 as the

minimum salary for a class IV employee states : "Since a class IV employee at the beginning of his career is not usually expected to be responsible for the maintenance of three adult consumption units including himself, and may not even be married, the Commission recommended a minimum remuneration of Rs 185 per month for a whole-time government employee at the start of his career. At the end of five years' service such an employee will automatically get the need-based wage of Rs 196 per month according to the time scale the Commission has suggested." A close examination of this logic will reveal the absurdity hidden in it. Socio-economic studies reveal that age of marriage is low in families with lower incomes and rises as incomes increase. Nearly all those persons who join IAS are also unmarried in the first year of their service. Similarly, most of the persons who join as LDCs, UDCs, engineers and so on are also unmarried in the initial years of service and it is only after a few years of service that they decide to enter the wedlock. In fact, the poorer sections are handicapped in the sense that they cannot educate their children and are, thus, forced to join lower jobs. To use this argument against the need for upgrading the salaries of the poor sections is, to say the least, downright dishonesty. The Pay Commission is apologetic when it says that since the numbers involved are large in the lower pay scales, the Commission found it difficult to recommend even a basic salary of Rs 196 as the need-based minimum as determined by it. The elitist approach in the recommendations of the Commission is evident from the fact that it recommends increase in the maximum rate of pension from Rs 675 to Rs 1000. It has also raised the ceiling limit of gratuity from Rs 24,000 to 30,000. Both these recommendations are aimed at ensuring, to the Indian elite, a comfortable life even after retirement.

Similarly, the Commission has recommended payment of House Rent Allowance at 15 per cent of pay to a maximum of Rs 400 in A, B<sub>1</sub> and B<sub>2</sub> Class cities. In 'C' Class cities, this allowance is to be paid at 7½ per cent of pay subject to a maximum amount of Rs 200. In other words, the Commission by raising the ceiling to Rs 400 has permitted persons in the top income brackets also to become entitled to House Rent Allowance. The Commission has again raised the upper pay limit for payment of Children's Education Allowance and reimbursement of tuition fee to all employees drawing Rs 1200 per month. In other words, the Commission has in its proposals covered the persons in higher pay ranges. Such an extension of concession in a poor country to better-off sections is not in conformity with the priorities that a society programming for socialism should have.

Another example of the elitist approach of the Commission is provided by quietly sanctioning perquisites to the top officials in the army. The Commission states: "While no changes have been recommended in the scales for the Major General, Lt General and General, the Commission has recommended that the existing concession of recovery of rent for unfurnished accommodation and concessional rates of recovery of

TABLE 1  
MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM SALARIES FOR VARIOUS CATEGORIES AFTER 15 YEARS ON THE  
BASIS OF PAY SCALES RECOMMENDED BY THIRD PAY COMMISSION

Category	Recommended Scale of Pay	Initial Minimum Salary	Basic Salary After 15 Years	Percentage		Index Of Salaries With The Lowest Minimum As The Base	
				Increase In Basic Salary After 15 Years Over The Initial Minimum Salary	After 15 Years	Initial	After 15 Years
1	2	3	4	5	6		.7
1 Peons, unskilled workers gangmen (railway)	Rs 185-2-193-3-220 = 13 Years	185	228	23.2	100.0	100.0	100.0
2 Daftries, jamadars, cooks leverman-grade II, pointsmen, B (Railway)	Rs 190-3-208-4-240 = 14 Years	190	245	28.9	102.7	102.7	107.4
3 Artisans (semi - skilled)	Rs 200-3-212-4-240-5- 280 = 19 Years	200	260	30.0	108.1	108.1	114.0
4 Skilled workers, lower division clerks, staff car drivers, ticket collectors	Rs 260-6-326-8-390-10- 400 = 20 Years	260	358	37.6	140.5	140.5	157.0

5	Upper division clerks, qualified pharmacists and compounders, assistant station masters, higher secondary-trained primary school teachers, librarians with diploma in library science	Rs 330-10-380-12-500-15-560 = 19 Years	330	500	51.5	178.3	219.2
6	Assistants and stenographers income tax inspectors, inspectors of Central excise etc.	Rs 425-15-560-20-700-25-800 = 20 Years	425	680	60.0	229.7	298.2
7	S A S Accountants	Rs 500-20-700-25-900 = 18 Years	500	825	65.0	270.2	361.8
8	Assistant Engineers, superintendent Central tax officers Class II, section officers (Central secretariat) head masters of high schools and vice-principals of H S Schools.	Rs 650-30-740-35-880-40-1200 = 15 Years	650	1200	84.6	351.3	562.3
9	Junior Class I posts in All India Services, scientific, engineering and other Class I Central services.	Rs 700-40-1100-50-1300 = 14 Years	700	1350	92.8	378.3	592.1

water and electricity charges should be extended to officers of the rank of Major General and above also. Similarly the Kit Maintenance Allowance of Rs 50 per month has also been extended to officers of the rank of Major General and above."

While expounding its philosophy, the Commission states that the existing pay structure is heavily weighted in favour of administrators, and, therefore, the Commission while recommending the scales have kept this principle in view : that all service people (technical and scientific) who entered government service should be able to reach the top without having to shift as administrators. This, the Commission observes, is particularly important in the case of specialists. For example, doctors, surgeons or technical experts or scientists need not become either directors-general or deputy directors-general if they want to reach the highest scales. It has been observed that by becoming administrators, they are lost to the profession. This recommendation of the Commission is basically sound, but carrying a legacy of the past philosophy, it still recommended the highest pay scales for administrators, specially those who join IAS. The Education Commission (1964-66) headed by Dr D S Kothari while making a strong plea for improving the salary scales of university teachers stated : "At the University stage, the remuneration of teachers should be broadly comparable to that of senior services of the government so that a fair proportion of the talent in the country is attracted to to the profession of teaching and research. What is important here is that the salary of a Vice-chancellor should be about the same as that of a secretary to the Union Government, the maximum salary of a University professor should be the same as the maximum in the senior scale of the IAS, and for outstanding professors, higher salaries comparable to the supertime scales of pay of the IAS should be available" (*Report of the Education Commission 1964-66*, p 50). To allocate talent to the various cadres of services where equally qualified persons are needed, it would be better to provide the same scales of pay and then leave the choice to the individuals on the basis of their aptitudes and predilections. Many good scholars who could have contributed much more in teaching or research are brought away by the All-India services by the lure of higher pay and perquisites and, thus, they become cogs in the administrative machinery. The Pay Commission should have adopted a better philosophy of distribution of talent rather than maintaining the colonial supremacy of the IAS. Following the Commission, the state governments will also recommend higher pay scales for their administrative services. Will it not perpetuate a social structure which puts the administrator at a higher pedestal than his counterpart who is equally (and in some ways even more) qualified but who opted for a different profession?

Two more questions are relevant from the point of view of moving towards a more progressive pay structure. First, should there be a federal or integrated pay commission for the country as a whole? Secondly, should there be a co-ordinated approach towards wages in public and

private sectors? The Pay Commission should be structured on a federal basis and its recommendations be made applicable to all the states and union territories in a uniform manner. A large number of unions of employees in different sectors agitate for parity with their counterparts in the Central Government in matters of scales of pay, dearness allowance and other conditions of employment. The recent strike of school teachers in Haryana or of college teachers in various parts of the country for the acceptance of UGC scales are cases in point. Whenever the Central Government improves the pay scales of its employees, it sets in motion a chain reaction all over the country. It is, therefore, very desirable that a federal pay commission should review the pay structure of both state and Central Government employees and recommend uniform scales all over India.

The Pay Commission has deliberately rejected the principle of pay co-ordination between private and public sectors in order not to start a competitive wage escalation. However, it hopes the government will take steps to implement a broad-based income and wage policy for the country. The Commission has accepted the view that the wage policy enunciated for 4 million Central Government employees has to be extended to the private sector as well, but no concrete measures have been suggested for the purpose. A much bigger number of workers seek employment in the private sector, and, in this sector the need for getting the scales implemented is paramount. By the very fact that the Commission's proposals will be implemented in the public sector, conditions of disequilibrium are bound to be created in the labour market and the tendency of labour to shift from private to public sectors will grow. But in a labour-surplus economy where a high degree of unemployment prevails, the private sector does not find much difficulty in recruiting from the "reserve army" of unemployed. It is the existence of this situation that makes the problem more difficult of solution.

RUDDAR DATT

## *Progressive Hindi Writers' Conference*

### *An Assessment*

THE progressive trend in Hindi literature assumed a distinct shape in the thirties. All those writers who were concerned about the evil impact of British imperialism on Indian life and culture decided to work collectively against that impact. At the same time, they also found themselves pitched against orthodox values which sought to resist any radical change in the people's outlook. One discerned in their writings a critical treatment of the then existing living conditions of the peasantry, Harijans, labour, and the middle class in general. There was enough evidence of a desire to contribute significantly towards the socio-political and cultural needs of our people as was reflected in magazines like *Hans*, *Naya Sahitya* and *Naya Path*.

This trend was a part of our broad political movement against the British. The political unity of different sections of people, including the bourgeoisie, for the overthrow of British rule created the necessary background for a fight on the literary front also, which meant that the literary movement got its perspective from the broad national political movement. This period also saw the emergence of progressive movements in many other Indian literatures.

This movement bore ample fruit and threw up many a writer wedded to democratic values and ending exploitation of the poor by the rich. But, it remained, by and large, vague with regard to the precise theoretical questions, such as strategy and tactics to be adopted for ending class exploitation in our concrete historical situation. This partly explains the subsequent confusion and petering out of the movement after the attainment of freedom from the British yoke in 1947.

There were also other factors which caused the weakening of the progressive movement after 1947. At the time of the assumption of state power, the Indian bourgeois class reached an understanding with the British imperialists, and thus planned to pursue policies against the interests of the toiling masses. They also worked out a class alliance with the landlords. This change in the pattern of class forces made its impact on the *cultural* front by creating confusion among the progressive writers regarding their role in the new situation. An illusion was sought to be created that having won freedom for the 'Indian people as a whole', it was no more necessary to wage a collective ideological and political battle against the ruling class within the country in order to safeguard and pursue the interests of the working masses. Instead, writers were expected to 'co-operate' with the regime so that a 'new nation could be built'. The limited expansion of industry, trade, education, and other

sectors, the unplanned character of which became clear later on, strengthened the illusion and caused disruption in the ranks of even the relatively more committed writers.

But the economic policies framed to pursue the capitalist path of development helped only the capitalists while they emaciated the working masses. Gradually, the 'supporters' of the regime among writers were exposed and the cultural values they wanted to propagate met with disapproval and criticism.

In the meantime, it also dawned upon the writers that the traditional values of a bygone era only served to arrest the onward march of history and played a reactionary role, and that the solution of our cultural and social problems lay in the complete smashing of the old concepts and the adoption of the new democratic norms. Again, the democratic norms could not be adopted or cultivated in isolation. They were to be made available to our people who required them for their meaningful participation in the process of social change.

Being conscious of the new needs and tasks, our writers could not sit idle and watch the ever-worsening conditions of the masses. They had to think anew about the various issues on which they could take a correct and principled stand and thus strive to awaken the masses for united action against the undemocratic policies of the regime. They could do this by forming themselves into a broad and responsible social group and drawing up a clear-cut programme of action. This became evident from journals like *Katha*, *Vaam*, *Samarambha*, *Samaiyk*, *Ore*, *Uttarardha*, *Sambodhan*, and others which emerged on the literary scene in a span of four years and showed promise of playing an important role in uniting the progressive writers on broad left and democratic issues. Hence the need of a progressive writers' conference to discuss important socio-cultural questions in order to reach general agreement on a minimum concrete programme.

Of the resolutions passed at the end of the Conference of the Progressive Writers at Banda held in February 1973, two drew our attention most specifically. One condemned the recent burning of a Harijan at the hands of a landlord in Banda district; the other highlighted the fact that all thinking people in general and writers in particular, in our country, face the prospect of denial of civil rights and liberties. Of special interest was the fact that this heinous crime was perpetrated soon after the Silver Jubilee celebrations of Independence. The relevant question to be asked is this: do we blame one or two individuals who perpetrated such crimes, or do we blame the ruling classes which have failed to create the minimum social conditions under which we could live with, namely, a sense of physical security, if not 'equality', 'justice' and so forth?

Secondly, the repressive measures taken against writers who gave vent to their sense of disillusionment with the present social system also pointed towards the attitude of intolerance of the rulers for any criticism whatsoever. This was a serious situation. And it could not be viewed in isolation.

In order to arrive at an understanding of the current socio-political background which may have necessitated a united front of the progressive writers, we have to mark the following :

- a) The deepening of the economic crisis in the last few years as a result of policies which encourage the intensive exploitation of the workers by the rich;
- b) Social oppression of the workers, peasants, landless labourers and salaried employees, generating large-scale discontent, resentment and revolt;
- c) Denial of democratic rights to the toiling people so that their resentment does not assume an organised character;
- d) Indirect and direct curbs on writers and intellectuals so that their plans to lay bare effectively the evil aspects of our society are systematically thwarted.

In response to such challenges—posed on one side by the ruling classes through their acts of repression against the poor; and on the other by the oppressed poor masses through their united democratic actions against their 'masters'—a broad progressive outlook has begun to emerge in Hindi literature recently. As our objective historical situation demanded, this outlook has been strengthening itself gradually by showing a consistent concern for the developments in our society. Again, this outlook has moved in the healthy direction of becoming an active participant in the larger struggle for social emancipation. Considerable numbers of young and enthusiastic writers have rallied together and registered their general sense of disapproval through articles, short stories and poems and by putting up magazines from their centres of work and influence. The present All-India Progressive Hindi Writers' Conference held at Banda this year seemed to be a step in the direction of enabling writers to reach a common minimum agreement on some of the basic literary tasks.

Kedar Nath Agrawal, a fine sensitive Hindi poet and the chief architect of the Conference, rightly pointed out at the beginning that a fruitful dialogue between the progressives of various political shades is possible only if the assembled writers observed proper sobriety while thrashing out the points of difference. He seemed to have in mind the few 'old hands' many of whom had quietly slipped into oblivion in so far as the fulfilment of a significant literary role at the present time was concerned.

The four sessions into which the Conference was divided were devoted to poetry, short story, literary criticism and the organisation question respectively.

Rajiv Saxena's paper on the poetry of the post-Independence period broadly outlined the reasons for the failure of the progressive movement in the past. He considered the trend of New Poetry as faithfully reflecting the cultural ethos of our country because it had broadened the writer's vision. Thus, it had taken Hindi poetry forward. The same thing

could be done better by our progressive writers if they adapted themselves to the 'new historical tasks'. He asserted that the success of New Poetry, which was based on the principle of anti-Communism and which ultimately led the essentially self-seeking poets to the negative tendency of individualism, could be traced to the failure of the progressive movement to play its role in the changed circumstances.

The main burden of Vishwambharnath Upadhyaya's paper was that poetry should be tested at many levels. In his view, content was an important part of a poem but it alone was not enough. Undue emphasis on the content made poems look like journalistic comments. He felt that poems which gave "newer pleasure every time you read them" and which "transformed the soul of the reader" (whatever that might mean) should be distinguished from those which were written on large-scale and which appeared to be "written by one man under various names".

The papers of Lalit Mohan Awasthi and Manmathnath Gupta were similar in many ways. Awasthi proposed a 'judicious' strategy through which our goal of social change could be achieved. In his view, our country lacked many things for which a ruthless battle could be waged. But, at the same time, he asserted, prosperity had also increased and percolated down to the poorer masses. In one breath, he reeled out figures of immense money concentrated in the hands of the big bourgeoisie (was it outside the influence of economic policies of the class-regime represented by the government?), and the facilities of gas stoves, pressure cookers, transistor sets, 'enjoyed by the lower strata'. He felt that the situation was ripe for a revolution in the country, and tried to suggest that collaboration with those sections of the ruling classes, which were 'progressive', might be fruitful to combat the big bourgeoisie and the landlords.

Chandrabhushan Tiwari's paper on short story stood in sharp contrast to all others. Tiwari analysed the circumstances in which the New Short Story took origin, and the characteristic answers it presented to the burning questions of the time. He established a link between the peculiar sensibility of storywriters and the approach of that particular social class which cherished dreams of stability and prosperity, the class which wanted to pluck the fruits of 'nation-building' without any significant participation in the socio-historical process. He went on to recognise the fact of disillusionment in this class under the pressures of economic failures, rising cost of living and the growth of the working class movement.

Tiwari did not leave the question here. He examined some important short stories in their concrete artistic context and held that not all writers of the New Short Story could be dubbed trivial or insignificant. In fact, some of the vital aspects of these writers were duly appreciated.

A major part of his paper gave evidence of a mature critical effort. Still, in the last part, Tiwari fumbled. His formulations regarding the new crop of writers were far from convincing. Also, his selection of

these writers and their stories seemed arbitrary and schematic. It smacked of an effort to read more meaning in some stories than actually there was. He could have realised the difficulties we face when we have to discuss stories written in the recent past. In our haste to suggest the required strategic direction, we tend to pass off some of our initial impressions as considered critical statements.

The drawbacks of the papers presented for discussion were many. Our critics seemed to be unaware of the need of the day. No doubt it was necessary to perceive the aspects of inter-relationship and inter-action between literature and the socio-cultural background. But equally important was the question of literature being different from, say political pamphleteering, abstract economic analysis, historical commentary, and so forth. We should have considered literature as a part of the cultural phenomenon thrown up by the class conflict at a particular time. We should have then gone on to distinguish those aspects of the class literature which were related to the cultural needs, longings and aspirations of the revolutionary class from those which reflected the wishes of the vested interests in society. We should have attempted a deep and scientific study of those literary forms which the revolutionary as well as the decadent urges of our society assumed.

In this way, we could move in the direction of evolving progressive aesthetics based on dialectical reasoning and the consideration of social relevance. Only then could we effectively combat culturalism and aestheticism—the concepts implying that literature is beyond and outside the scope of history. Then, we could also minimise the danger of sectarianism and adventurism—the outcome of undialectical reasoning which negates a correct understanding of the socio-political and cultural scene and encourages empty phrase-mongering in place of a correct selection of themes and emphases.

It must also be noted that these papers generated a healthy clash of views. Most of the participants numbering over 70 recognised that the vigour and vitality seen in the discussion was a sign of keenness on the part of writers to come together and collectively fight the bourgeois-federal values. In this respect, Karan Singh Chauhan, Sudhish Pachauri, Khagendra Prasad Thakur, Ramesh Upadhyaya, Surendra Chaudhry, Premendra, Savyasachi, Dhoomil, Surendranath Tiwari, and many others made notable contributions towards evolving a strategy for united action based on frank and sharp criticism, not on “mutual understanding” and compromise.

In the concluding session, the writers unanimously adopted a policy statement and programme in which they sketched a broad and workable analysis for a common understanding and action. The statement noted that the “pursuance of the policy of mixed economy in the last 25 years in the name of independent and planned economic development had encouraged the monopoly capital, which had adversely affected the whole economic, political and social structure and arrested the growth of

society and culture". It drew attention to the remnants of feudal set-up like "blind beliefs, religious superstitions, communal ideas and revivalist tendencies" which reflected the historically outmoded and irrational character of the feudal interests in our society.

Hailing the emergence of Bangladesh as a secular and democratic country, and the victory of the people of Vietnam in their liberation struggle against American imperialism, it urged the progressives to remain cautious against a new American conspiracy and mischievous anti-democratic alliance in any part of Asia. It also stressed the need for greater unity of all shades of progressives to wage a united struggle against the aforesaid evils and threats existing in our society. This was not possible if the immediate tactical differences on the political front were allowed to unnecessarily disturb the functioning on the literary front. Among the tasks which the programme urged the writers to undertake were the development of scientific outlook on the basis of which socio-historical questions could be examined with an appropriate sense of perspective; separating of the healthy humanist elements in our cultural heritage from the narrow and constricted social tendencies and a re-interpretation of the former for the benefit of the toiling masses; and, development of the progressive aesthetics and the standards of literary judgement and evaluation.

Finally, a 25-member Contact Committee was formed which would mobilise larger support for the cause of progressive movement and thrash out various measures to be taken for the furtherance of unity among like-minded writers in the light of the policy-cum-programme document adopted by the Conference.

Let us hope that the joint statement and programme start a more fruitful dialogue among progressive writers for future collective action. The Conference also underlined the necessity of more vigorous and honest exchange of views on issues like the class character of the Indian state; the precise nature of the imperialist values which are sought to be propagated through private, semi-government and governmental agencies; the manner in which the outdated feudal values are used by our ruling classes to frustrate the progressive march of history; the role of Sahitya, Lalit Kala, Sangeet Natak and other academies, radio and television networks, monopoly press and big publishing houses; class values represented by the study-courses of various literatures framed by Indian universities; the possibilities of evolving proletarian culture in literature as a positive counter-measure to the existing cultural values created by the class regime of the country, and so forth.

We have yet to see whether the Contact Committee goes about its job efficiently and sincerely by organising a free and frank debate on the issues related to the area of culture and literature. We apprehend that if we falter because of our deep-rooted tendencies of compromise, collaboration and acquiescence, we would be strengthening our class enemies.

We are likely to face challenges from two quarters. Firstly, a few

'progressives' who have allowed themselves to be in the swim temporarily, hoping that their narrow factional interests would be served, may feel frustrated sooner or later and may adopt disruptionist tactics. Needless to say that such elements will have to be spotted without delay and prevented, through open and frank criticism, from becoming harmful. Secondly, a unity of all the left and democratic writers on the basis of a common minimum understanding would certainly induce the writers of the other camp to launch an offensive. This camp of reactionaries and *status quo*-ists would use all their means to vitiate, divide, confuse and finally break this progressive front. Considering the nature and quality of discussions in the Conference and the writers' desire to reach an agreement on broad strategic questions reflected in the statement, programme and resolutions, it seems reasonable to expect that this front would measure up to these challenges effectively.

ANAND PRAKASH

## DISCUSSION

### *On Technical Education with Special Reference to Gwalior Administrative Division*

EDUCATIONAL planning in a backward country must needs be based on the premise that the people are the most valuable resource material for social and economic development. Consequently it should be the endeavour of the state to constantly improve the physical and mental capabilities of its people. It is obvious that the expenditure on education has to be considered as an investment in the development of society and not as an outlay of charity.

Needless to say, the present approach to education in India is not even remotely connected with the above concept. The ruling classes in India have perpetuated, in their own self-interest, the colonial system of education established during British rule. To expect any radical change in the educational policies from those classes will be no more than wishful thinking.

This paper is primarily intended to stimulate discussion on aspects of technical education. It is the contention of the author that making even revolutionary changes in the pattern of higher education, without solving in a democratic and scientific way the problems of primary and secondary education and of unemployment, will be a futile exercise.

A biased approach of the ruling classes towards education and their subservience to imperialist interests are acutely manifested in the field of technical education. The higher institutes<sup>1</sup> like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), the Birla Institute of Technology and Science (Pilani), the Indian Institute of Science (Bangalore) or Roorkee University provide education to students from the most privileged sections of society. Then there are engineering colleges for the sons and daughters of businessmen, middle-level executives and landlords. Polytechnics are meant for the boys with lower middle class origin and the Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) are at the bottom as the poor man's institutions.<sup>2</sup>

The annual per capita expenditure incurred by the state on a student in a higher institute is over ten thousand rupees: in an ordinary engineering college it works out at about Rs 1500. The expenditure is

much lower in the polytechnics. In higher institutes there are highly qualified, even imported<sup>3</sup>, teachers. In engineering colleges and polytechnics the teaching staff consists of many who failed to get employment elsewhere in the field.

Until recently as many as forty per cent of the degree-holders from some of these higher institutes used to leave the country for USA or Europe. (Presently because of widespread unemployment it is difficult to get research grants and jobs in America). V V John<sup>4</sup> pleads that most of those who have 'drained' to foreign countries are not of a very high calibre. Merit of this argument apart, he ignores the fact that our national resources are wasted on their education in India. Parenthetically it should be remembered that a very large number of projects in all the disciplines in USA are financed by the US Armed Forces.

Most of the research work being done in the higher institutes in our country is irrelevant to the needs of India. It is of use only to a very sophisticated technology. The motive of such research, more than any advancement of science, is personal aggrandisement through getting published in standard international journals. Obviously, this research is, if at all, made use of only by industrially advanced countries. Some professors in the higher institutes obtain research grants directly from the US Armed Forces. They are thus, in a way, helping the imperialists in their military ambitions. Surprisingly, the Kothari Commission paid no attention to the problem of foreign exploitation of our education.

There is a clear break-up in the responsibilities of the higher institutes and other colleges. The former produce engineer scientists for highly paid research and development jobs and the latter turn out maintenance engineers. Engineers from higher institutes provide expertise for automation and sophistication in industry<sup>5</sup>, which result in large-scale retrenchment of staff and lower job-potentials. Thus technical education is being used to further strengthen the economic imbalances in the society.

The following should, in my view, form the general perspective for planning in technical education, if it is to serve as an instrument of socio-economic change.

First, the technical institutes should be freed from foreign imperialistic influence and made to serve the interests of our country.

Secondly, planning for technical education must keep in view the specific conditions available in the country, particularly its industrial backwardness. Copying western models<sup>6</sup> of education will not meet the requirements of rapid industrial progress in a predominantly backward country.

Thirdly, availability of large manpower resources rules out the desirability of the type of technical education which leads to an expertise in automation and sophisticated technology, although such an education as a scientific discipline can be encouraged. Our technical education, to a very large extent, should confine itself to solutions of problems

connected with skill, maintenance and innovations in unsophisticated technology.

Fourthly, opportunities should be created for education upto the highest level for children from socially and economically backward sections. This should be done by removing imbalances, giving more concessions, creating proper environment through community development and removing artificial barriers like English as the medium of education.

Fifthly, the social obligation of education should be emphasised. All factors responsible for social stratification consequent upon acquiring a particular type of education should be removed. Respect for manual labour should be inculcated in the students and education must be related to the realities of life.

Sixthly, bureaucracy in education should be completely eliminated. There should be free flow of ideas in administrative and academic fields. Democratic representation in the administrative and academic bodies must be given to all sections of the people on the campus.

### *Technical Education in Gwalior Division*

Gwalior division is economically, politically and educationally a backward region.<sup>7</sup> The former rulers of Gwalior State had a vested interest in keeping the region educationally backward. They did not want politically conscious people, who would have opposed feudal and landlord exploitation. The only technical institute in the whole of the then Gwalior State, comprising seven districts of present day Madhya Pradesh, was a polytechnic in Gwalior established in 1905. The first and only engineering college in the division was started in 1957.

Presently the technical institutions in Gwalior division are : one engineering college, two polytechnics, three industrial training institutes and one technical higher secondary school. The engineering college also runs post-graduate courses for its teachers. The degree courses are in (i) civil (ii) electrical and (iii) mechanical engineering. There are diploma courses in the above three branches and textile technology. I T I gives training in over fifteen trades.

In the engineering college, the intake of students is 120. In a survey conducted by the author it was found that over fifty per cent of the students comes from large towns (population : 50 thousand or more), thirty five per cent from families with over six thousand rupees annual income and only eighteen per cent comes from families with annual incomes less than three thousand rupees.<sup>8</sup> The percentage of scheduled caste students is about eight. Polytechnics admit over two hundred students, a majority of them coming from small towns and villages. The number of scheduled caste students is about 12 per cent. ITIs admit over one thousand students, mostly from poor families, and twentyfive per cent of scheduled caste origin.

### *Standard of Education*

The prerequisites for raising the standard of technical education

are (i) a good standard at primary and secondary school stages and (ii) solution of the problems of unemployment and underemployment. Lack of employment opportunities after the higher secondary stage brings into higher education students who are neither fit for nor interested in it. Unemployment among engineers and technicians, on the other hand, causes frustration and indifference among students who see no prospects ahead. It is pertinent however, to make the following observations with regard to the standard of technical education.

1) Technical education at all levels must be linked with the industrial development in the region. In the courses of study there should be emphasis on topics connected with development of the region. An example is the levelling of Chambal and Kuwari ravines in the district of Bhind and Morena. This project should be undertaken in the Fifth Plan and all technical institutes of the division should be associated with the project. Students must be made familiar with the practical problems of industry from the beginning. It is most essential to introduce half-work-half-study pattern of education in technical institutions.

2) There is plenty of loud talk in 'responsible' quarters about giving industrial training to students during their study period. The Kothari Commission states:<sup>9</sup>

... It is the general view particularly of employers... that our (engineering) graduates lack practical experience and knowledge of the industry. The existing practice of requiring practical experience in vacation periods is open to a number of abuses... while we believe that a strong science base is needed by engineers, we believe, if anything, even more strongly... that production experience should be an integral part of the curriculum. We recommend the wide extension at this level, as with technicians (diploma-holders), of sandwich courses.

In the sandwich course scheme students are given training in industrial concerns during summer vacations after the third year of degree education (second year of diploma course) and for six months after the final year. The training is not for all the students. For example, in the Madhav Institute of Technology and Science (MITS) Gwalior, only six students out of more than 120 are selected for this training every year. The scheme is open to many abuses and the college authorities are thinking of discontinuing it.

Six years after the publication of the Kothari Commission report, the industrial training to all the students is far from being realised. Kothari Commission banks on the co-operation from industry for such a training. The report states:<sup>10</sup>

This (co-operation with industry) has been the central theme of our recommendations. In some countries such as UK under its recent Development Act, a levy of 2½ per cent of the wage bill is imposed on industry for providing training facilities. While re-emphasising the need for co-operation between industry and educational authorities in

the development of training facilities, we feel that it may not be necessary in the early stage to enact such legislation in India. In its place industry should be encouraged to start training schemes and a central scheme of subsidy to industrial concerns providing training facilities may be usefully started.

Is such a co-operation possible on a voluntary basis? Experience tells us that the industrialists have narrow selfish interests. They do not like to associate with their concerns any activity which is not linked with production. Whenever they recruit engineers and technicians for particular jobs, they train these persons in the narrow areas of their job-requirements. The number of such recruits is small and, therefore, does not disturb the production schedule. Even in the sandwich scheme many industrialists are reluctant to take up students, despite government subsidies. In Britain, where capitalism is in its advanced stage and the industrialists have strong vested interests in the educational system, legislation has been necessary to enforce the training scheme. Is it not naive on the part of Kothari Commission to expect that persuasion and subsidies will work in this country, where industrialists have enormous influence on legislating bodies? It is not surprising, therefore, that even after six years of the publication of Kothari Commission Report, no move for any meaningful co-operation from the industries (public sector included) has been made.

3) The workshops in the technical institutions are completely idle for at least four months a year (three months during vacations and one month during examination preparation leave for the students). During working days the workshops run on an average for about four hours a day.

With some addition in equipment and change in the set-up these workshops can easily be converted into production units. They can be expanded to include electrical and civil engineering sections. Besides giving a student training in actual production and design by this conversion, we will be able to utilise an idle capacity, improve the financial position of the institutes, produce quality goods at cheaper cost, provide additional emoluments to the technical staff and *improve the educational climate in the technical institutions.*

Kothari Commission recommends the conversion of workshops into production units. The Commission states:<sup>11</sup>

Workshop practices can be made more production-oriented, both in the prescribed courses and in vacation periods, with staff and students undertaking research and design of equipment needed in other educational institutions. Groups of students can be set production problems, taken from industry as project work.

But here again, no steps have been taken so far to implement this recommendation anywhere in India. One objection to this proposal is that once workshops become industrial units, trade union movement will enter the campuses. This is a reactionary argument. Other reasons

apart, why should not the students be made familiar with all aspects of industrial life, including labour disputes? Presently in the technical institutions of Gwalior Division, even minor equipment like fans, refrigerators and water-coolers are repaired by private workshops.

4) The engineering faculty in Gwalior College has incorporated some high standard topics in the syllabii. The concept of raising the standards has come to mean that the syllabii of higher institutes be copied. Firstly, as pointed out earlier the so-called standard education in higher institutes is irrelevant to the present needs of the country and secondly, there are no facilities in terms of qualified teaching staff, good library and equipment.

5) One big difficulty, which a student faces after admission into engineering diploma and degree courses, is the language-barrier. Education upto higher secondary stage is in Hindi and the engineering education is in English. It takes an average student at least one year to acclimatise himself with the change in the medium. Students from villages and backward communities suffer the most.<sup>12</sup> In a study conducted by the author a few years ago<sup>13</sup> similar tests in Physics to First year B.E students were administered in Hindi and English. Forty per cent passed (35 per cent marks minimum) in Hindi medium while only 14 per cent could get through in English medium. English as the medium of education further strengthening the social imbalances, immediate switch-over to the regional languages as the media of education has become a democratic imperative. Technical English and some other foreign languages can be taught as library languages at the graduate level. It is interesting to note that in Osmania University the medium of education upto post-graduate and graduate levels in science and engineering was Urdu upto 1948.

### *Teachers*

The standard of teaching in the technical institutions of Madhya Pradesh in general and Gwalior Division in particular is not very high. In most cases, only those engineering degree or diploma holders, who do not get jobs elsewhere opt for teaching jobs.

Except for the routine teaching work, there is no academic activity worth its name in the institutions. In such an environment a teacher becomes idle. A good and academically oriented teacher gets dissatisfied and leaves for better institutions at the earliest opportunity. There can be many challenging and intellectually satisfying jobs related to the development of the region. But, there are no large-scale plans for development of the region and secondly technical institutions are rarely associated with the few projects under way. Also, the pattern of technical education in our country is such that academics with high intellectual capabilities are attracted towards what is called 'research work'.

Another cause of poor teaching is the examination system. For example, a very high proportion of marks is given to the sessional work.

As marks are awarded by the subject teacher, this procedure keeps the students in check: they do not protest against bad teaching. There are teachers in some institutes who just copy down the solved problems from the book on to the blackboard.

No sincere efforts are being made to improve the teaching abilities of the teachers. The schemes of Summer Institutes and Industrial Training during vacations are inadequate. The senior teachers do not take advantage of these schemes and the process of training is slow and of a short duration.

As a rule, the senior teachers are preoccupied with examination work during the vacations. They have a vested interest in financially remunerative examination jobs. The external examinations are exchanged with teachers of other universities on a 'give and take' basis. Even while allotting teaching work, examination remuneration is kept in view. The author strongly feels that the remuneration for examination work should be completely stopped all over the country and instead teachers be given some sort of an examination allowance.

There is concern among sections of the teaching profession about commanding respect *a la guru*. These teachers expect blind faith on the part of students and supreme respect from the society at large. The old maxim, "Guru Brahma, Guru Vishnu, Guru Deva Maheshwara" is still nursed by some teachers. The concept is irrelevant to the present day when equal social status to all the working people and respect for every human being is the crying need.

In our country respect and privilege go with power and authority. The British legacy of giving enormous privileges and powers to the executives and bureaucrats has been continuing since independence. These sections revel in their 'super-status'. The demand of all working people, including the teachers, should be to abolish the privileges and the super-status of the executives and bureaucrats.

The teacher-student relationship is also not healthy. At the higher education stage, when the student is supposed to become somewhat responsible, maintenance of a distance from him by a teacher is absurd. The faculties of enquiry, inquisitiveness and free thinking in a student are not stimulated by this attitude. The relationship between a teacher and his students should be one of friendship and understanding.

Democratic consciousness among the teachers is at a low level. Most of them are not concerned about democratic demands for freedom of political opinion, representation on university bodies and management councils.

### *Students*

Our education is not organically related to the realities of life. Thus, despite going through logical and rational disciplines of study, many engineering, medical and science students remain religious fanatics,<sup>14</sup> superstitious, dogmatic and orthodox in their personal and

social life. Instead of fighting the dark forces of communalism and casteism, the students themselves become tools in the hands of these forces. The students of Gwalior Division are no exception. They are divided along caste lines. Thakurs are very dominant because of their martial background. Being of landlord origin, most of the Thakur-students have association with reactionary groups.

The national students' organisations like Students Federation of India, Vidhyarshi Parishad, Samajwadi Yuvajan Sabha and All India Students' Federation are just nominally represented in technical institutions. Unhealthy habits like alcoholic addiction, gambling and visiting prostitutes are on the increase among sections of students. Many students from landlord and business families, because of secure family incomes, are in no hurry to get through with the courses of study. These students indulge in goonda activities, terrorise other students and disrupt academic life in the compuses on flimsy excuses. They look for opportunities to pass examinations using unfair means.

Until the early sixties when the stock of engineers was high, engineering students used to carry a superiority complex. They were not associating with the general body of the students on issues of common concern. Even in their own struggles against injustice, co-operation from students of other disciplines was not sought. Unemployment among engineers has brought about a sea-change in the mentality of engineering students. Now these students not only associate themselves with others on issues of common concern but at times, give lead to other students by raising their voice for democratic causes.

### *Administration*

The University Acts of Madhya Pradesh do not provide for democratic representation of teachers on any of the university bodies. Teachers from affiliated and constituent colleges of a university cannot contest for the membership of the Court even from Registered Graduates' Constituency, although they can register themselves as voters. Thus none of the three groups which have a direct concern with education namely, teachers, students and karmcharis, is involved in the decision-making of the university. Some teachers are the members of university bodies by virtue of their positions, but they do not represent the general will of the teachers. Students and karmcharis do not have even that kind of representation.

In the statutes of Jiwaji University, Gwalior, there is provision for democratic representation of teachers on the managing committees of privately-managed colleges. The number of such representatives is a small fraction of the total membership of a managing committee. Most of the managements choose their favourites and yes-men as members of the committee. For example, there are no elected representatives of teachers on the Board of Governors, MITS, Gwalior. The teachers have been demanding this for a long time. Despite many representations in

this regard, no steps have been taken by the University so far to implement its own rules. Karmcharis and students are completely ignored by the University and the managements.

The situation in the government-run colleges is worse. Bureaucracy has a complete hold on these institutions and even for unimportant matters teachers have to depend on the executives. In the administration of the institutions, the principals and the heads of the department act more like executives rather than as academic leaders. A majority of teachers have no say in either administrative or academic decision-making. One right move in the direction of establishing an equalitarian set-up in the educational institutions could well be the introduction of unified grades for all categories of teachers.

N G BODAS

<sup>1</sup> Five Indian Institutes of Technology were established with foreign help at Kharagpur, Bombay, Madras, Kanpur and Delhi. In terms of facilities some of these institutes are among the best in the world.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Education Commission (1964-66)*, Chapter VI, p 119.

<sup>3</sup> Dean of Faculties, IIT, Kanpur visited the European countries and USA to recruit teachers. Teachers of Indian origin in USA are given direct employment offers.

<sup>4</sup> V V John, *Higher Education in India*, A B Shah (ed.), 1967, Lalvani Publishing House, Bombay, p 161.

<sup>5</sup> IIT, Kanpur is the key institute providing expertise in computers. With the provision for the import of Russian computers in the recently signed Indo-Soviet Economic Protocol, the role is likely to be shared by the Russian-aided IIT, Bombay.

<sup>6</sup> Kothari Commission draws heavily from instances in USA and UK. If at all we have to learn from a foreign experience, that of the People's Republic of China is more relevant to our conditions.

<sup>7</sup> Gwalior Administrative Division has six districts of Madhya Pradesh under its jurisdiction : Gwalior, Bhind, Morena, Shivpuri, Guna and Datia.

<sup>8</sup> Kothari Commission (*Report of the Education Commission, 1964-66*, p 119) gives the percentage of students from families with Rs 150 per month income as 38.7 per cent. This is incorrect. In the hope of obtaining some concession as poor students, some (particularly those belonging to the business and agriculturist families) give fictitious incomes of their guardians.

<sup>9</sup> *Report of the Education Commission (1964-66)*, Chapter XV, 15.43, p 377-78.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter XV, 15.70, p 383.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter XV, 15.44, p 378.

<sup>12</sup> Many scheduled caste students terminate their studies after failing in first B E examination in MITS, Gwalior. A very large proportion of students fails in this B E examination. The major cause for this is the change in medium of education.

<sup>13</sup> N G Bodas, "Some Thoughts on Making Hindi a Medium of Education in Engineering Subjects" (in Hindi), paper presented in a Seminar on 'Hindi as Medium of Technical Education', 1971, M P Hindi Grantha Academy, Bhopal.

<sup>14</sup> The secretary of the MITS Student's Union approached the president of the governing body for permission to build a Shiva temple in the college premises (non-residential). The permission was granted and the deity was installed with fanfare.

## BOOK REVIEW

BISHNU DEY, *IN THE SUN AND THE RAIN*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1972 pp 253 Price Rs 25.

THERE has been, of late, publication of a number of books in our country containing lectures, journalistic writings, literary criticism and miscellaneous *belles-letters* by distinguished academics. The trend, obviously imitative of the West, is, however, quite healthy and welcome for more than one reason. The stigma that usually attaches itself to our university dons is that they are very limitedly bookish, allergic to original thinking, indifferent to their socio-academic duties and generally more interested in the moves and countermoves on the chess-board of the academic administrative set-up than in fulfilling their true roles as the captains of national culture. There are very few indeed in our academic circles who would readily accept the all-important fact that the pursuit of an academic problem in the stereotyped pedagogic fashion has hardly any value unless the problem is related to the grass-roots, that is, to the problem of life here and now. Still less is the awareness that in any field of intellectual enquiry the point of intersection between the national and international should be correctly pinpointed and defined and that the degree and extent of fruitfulness in such endeavours are closely related to the success of the enquirer in having gained a full knowledge of the fertilisation and cross-fertilisation out of which the cultural matrix has evolved. It is in such context that Bishnu Dey's book should be welcomed and acclaimed.

*In The Sun and The Rain* has the significant subtitle *Essay on Aesthetics*. The twentyone essays in it along with the miscellaneous concluding piece, "Notes on the Way", deal with varied areas of fine arts, mainly those which would specially appeal to a scholar like Bishnu Dey who has devoted a lifetime to the study of literature and its explication to students. The distinction of Dey lies in the fact that he has also been a Bengali poet of outstanding merit, one whose poetry, though deeply saturated with European influences, has never lost indigenous cultural moorings. Happily for him it is his poetic sensibilities which flow into his critical efforts.

His subjects, homely and exotic, artistic and para-artistic, should be an object-lesson to all inasmuch as their inspiration is drawn equally from the Indian sun and rain and the winds of change and revolution often blowing in Europe and America. The critic in Dey is certainly more than a mere complementary factor of his poetic personality; it is the same continuum of sensibilities which gives his creative and critical efforts their foundational strength. The poet in him enriches the critic, just as it is his critical mind which instills a manly vitality into his poetry.

What aesthetic does Bishnu Dey seek to realise in his critical essays? The answer lies in what we have stated above: Dey's aesthetic is not any abstract and chimerical Absolute pursued, as commonly by the frustrated or neurotic bourgeois idealists, through metaphysical and pseudo-metaphysical casuistry and negation of the hard facts of life. In his 1961 *Seminar* essay "Let the Crisis Face the Indian Writer", Bishnu Dey coins the happy phrase 'dialectic of the psyche' to signify the most salient and insistent desideratum for any modern Indian writer in respect of how he responds and reacts to his own self and to the wider world outside. This he traces as a crucial stage of the class struggle going on in our country down the period of British occupation and rendered only more complex after Independence. Analysing this further, with his emphasis on the modern writer's twin responsibilities, personal and social, Dey states with great firmness: "Now the choice is set clearer between the wide-awake pain of isolation and reunion, the throes of self-consciousness, the question of facing the crisis—or just easy acquiescence, or habitual blindness and its reward of loaves and fishes." Surely for Bishnu Dey there cannot be either easy acquiescence or habitual blindness. The modern Indian writer has, as he says, to accept the crisis of the socio-economic life and also the parallel conflict and struggle within him. The crisis of belief, faith and personality automatically comes in, which can be resolved only by a fighting and dynamic idealism upon a new foundation of faith that will go to provide the creative psyche with the essential qualities of flexibility, resilience and sensitivity and make it forge new weapons and media of self-expression. Bishnu Dey must get the deserving critical acclaim for having repeatedly stressed the point in all his essays. Of course, the emphasis may appear to be of the *ex cathedra* type at times; it may even be treated as a kind of supercilious critical ukase tending to a kind of regimental approach to creative writing. But a discerning reader will surely accept Bishnu Dey's formulations in good grace by not overlooking the fact, already stated, that Dey is not only a critic but also a very successful Bengali poet of the new sensibilities. His essays are as much bold and unrelenting efforts at self-criticism as critical investigations into the mainstream of our arts and letters. The seeming angularity in some of the pronouncements may also disappear if they are adjusted, as Dey is able to do, to the rounded perspective of tradition, both national and international. "An Introduction to Bengali Literature", "Modern Art and the East", "India and Modern Art", are the

key essays in the book under review, which set forth with a telling clarity and precision the inner and dynamic harmony underlying all the changes and breakthroughs in the annals of our art and literature. Anyway, for all that matters, Bishnu Dey's criticism is at once personal and extra-personal, a self-realisation and a search for values in the wider world of artistic creation. The collection of writings in this volume, a necklace of old and new gold, is therefore, a judicious publication, it being characterised by Dey's unifying sensibilities, throwing light as much upon his own poetry as upon his versatility and insight as a critic.

If we have been able to express above what we sincerely feel about Bishnu Dey's literary and art criticism and have distributed the emphases judiciously, we may presume that we have made it clear to the reader that here we are dealing with a modern Indian critic who deserves to be distinguished from the rest of our native critical tribe, most of whom reduce criticism either to mere dilettantism or to unrewarding and fallacious application of the rate-scales of some of the catchy European or American critical theories to art and literature created under the Indian sun. Bishnu Dey's critical armoury does not betray any dent as far as his absorption in the accepted critical canons is concerned. The references and citations in the essays are from a wide variety of sources and are in most cases quite apt in the context in which they occur. But there is always the critical originality and insight which almost at one stroke make the references and cross-references fuse and harmonise in the organic pattern of Bishnu Dey's critical perspective. Brilliant examples of this are the essays on Rabindranath Tagore, Abanindranath Tagore, Jamini Roy, Louis Aragon and T S Eliot. There may be room for two or more opinions on the views and ideas expressed by the critic, but there should hardly be any cavil in respect of his critical method.

One may not, on a discerning analysis, agree with Bishnu Dey when he says in his essay on Michael Madhusudan Datta (p 28) that this poet's tragedy was one "of false premises in the history of Anglo-India". Rather, one should say that Michael's poetic talents, in spite of his having given blank verse to Bengali poetry, were fundamentally the same as that of Lord Surrey, who had pioneered blank verse into English poetry, which showed its full potentialities only when great creative poets like Marlowe and Shakespeare galvanised it into an integral part of the total dramatic design of their plays. Such pioneers in all ages do not both initiate and consummate any new realisation. They are men who, dissatisfied with the *status quo*, strive and struggle for a sharp breakthrough in any particular direction, and quite often their eyes are cast on the foreign and exotic elements which they boldly import for home consumption. They help create a taste for the imported stuff and persistently pursue their new love often in the teeth of opposition from the insular and hidebound vested interests. It is in this that their claim to recognition rests and on hardly anything else.

To talk glowingly of Madhusudan Datta's poetry and then ring

down the curtain upon him by saying that his was a false start and a tragedy of false premises, as Bishnu Dey has done, may be rhetoric applied to arouse a kind of sentimental adoration for the poet but is not certainly sound critical judgement. In the same way in "The Future of Our Folk Art", where the finely written peroration with its sagacious maxims and attitude of superior wisdom may probably appear to many as avoidable loquacity, the writer's emphases seem to be completely misplaced. Folk art of India is fundamentally a way of realisation and achievement of beauty, as Bishnu Dey states. But what matters more is the struggle of life which has given it its peculiar technique and its wonderful correlation of the individual and communal urges for self-expression. The Indian folk artist comes of those tribes and castes that have been subjected to ruthless exploitation and repression down the ages. The spirit behind their songs and dances, paintings and carvings has been supplied unfailingly by their protest against the socio-economic structure and their heroic urge for a just social order. In short, Indian folk art and the entire tribal culture of the country, as a matter of fact, have been the most beautiful expression given to the smouldering fire of the human passions waiting to be turned into a mighty flame to turn that order which believes in the tyrannical hegemony of a particular class over others.

Bishnu Dey calls the present trend in the country as the renaissance of our people's culture. Let us ask him what renaissance is that in which the bourgeoisie still rides roughshod over these people but contrives to pose as the patron of our folk art by doling out a few rewards and favours here and there and organising a few publicity stunts of folk art demonstration on ceremonial occasions. Even by all the casuistry of logic it is not possible to accept Bishnu Dey's glib formulation that our intelligentsia will be liberated by the chimerical vision of a renaissance in our people's culture. Such tall talks are wrong and useless.

The Indian folk artist will not rest so long as the rotten socio-economic order remains. His renaissance is still to come, its dawn will see the victorious end of his battle for the creation of the new socio-economic order and the emergence of the classless society. The bourgeois intelligentsia of the present-day breed will find their liberation only by aligning themselves completely with the people's struggle and not certainly by adopting the whisky-soda method of animation through occasional doses of patronage and appreciation of folk art, a recipe which Bishnu Dey seems to suggest. 'My Calcutta' exposes another form of aberration in which Dey's essays often abound—his sentimentality. Once described as a derelict and nightmarish town, Calcutta to Bishnu Dey is like: "With all thy faults mother, I love thee still!" He chooses to ignore completely the basic factor behind the present-day Calcutta's misery—its having become the den of political and economic exploiters; and also the basic factor behind its sustaining life—the heroic struggles of its unknown young men and women protesting against plunder and rapine. And the

most unpalatable thing is the lollypop of hope which Dey finds by repeating the words of a foreign visitor. It is all, we daresay, platitudinous and we have had enough of platitudes already. The same sob-stuff, though clothed in the verbiage of polish, we find in the writings on the poets and poetry. There must also be demur and dissent in respect of Dey's frequent references to Marx, dialectical materialism and socialistic society, in all of which the impression gained by the reader is that these things which often get reduced to mere catchy shibboleths are none the better in Dey's writings. His references are evidently in the light of approval and Dey's rhetoric lays bare his Marxist intellectual bias. But what is really unfortunate is his almost persistent inability to go the whole hog for it. The names are chanted almost as a ritual but not in a single instance is any serious attempt made to analyse the socio-economic or socio-cultural complex in the light of Marxian dialectics. While thus Dey stands exposed as the cat in the adage which would eat the fish but would not wet its feet, his Marxian perspective does not show any the better than that of the dying generations of exploiters and tycoons.

The most disappointing essay in this context is his "Marx and Bengali Writing". Hiren Mukerjee's note on the book-jacket says that Bishnu Dey's essays are 'provocative in style'. It provoked the present critic too but not in the way in which, in all probability, it had provoked Hiren Mukerjee at least to some kind of log-rolling in his laudatory notes on the author. What disconcerts and sometimes exasperates the reader is Bishnu Dey's fondness for tying knots of his clauses, with parentheses galore, and weaving involved sentence patterns of fantastic complexity. He is not incapable of writing chiselled but straightforward prose and I wonder why there should be such proclivity for the outmoded and useless baroque. Examples are odious but one cannot resist the temptation of quoting the following passage from "The Problem of Art in Education": "Of course, problems of mere good living often triumph over the idea of the good life. But even though we admire our worldliness and advise our sons and nephews to follow this easy path of success, we have not got the brazen courage to avow this fact openly. So we quite often find a compromise. We pay our homage to those who did not surrender to this middle-class temptation but fought for freedom and adventure of the mind, of the sensibility—particularly when these nonconformists are great men of the past, that is, when they do not embarrass us or compete with us actually—and on the other hand, we try to make the best of life here and now, this life which is so real, so earnest and not at all 'an empty dream', and whose goal is social success" (page 121). Though we may ignore the clichés and grammatical aberrations in the passage, which by themselves would suffice to downgrade the value of the style, we may just point out that language does not gain anything by such meandering progress. A simple idea, as the above is, ought not to call for artifice and convolution. The pity is that Dey, who displays commendable forthrightness in many of his essays, gets not

infrequently tempted to spin intricate linguistic webs (or yarn?) and is unbearable at those places where the idea demands to be expressed in its naked purity. The present critic's impression was that Dey could not, in many of his writings, rise above journalistic predilections.

But the basic virtues of Dey's literary efforts in English still remain untarnished. He has penetration and depth. His wide and well-assimilated reading makes the writings intellectual documents of great value. His sensitiveness to the socio-economic bearings of the modern Indian cultural development is a very healthy sign. And there are his unified critical sensibilities that boldly proceed to put the broken arcs of our cultural milieu into a rounded whole.

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# Social Scientist

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☐ Political Economy of Agriculture in Tamil Nadu ☐ Social Structure of Pluralism ☐ Waheed Shah : Punjabi Poet of Love and Liberation  
Drought in Maharashtra ☐ Third Pay Commission Report ☐ Emergence of Indian Nationalism

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Production and people in the principal primary sector form the subject of S A Koslaram's paper, "Political Economy of Agriculture in Tamil Nadu", which lays bare the achievement claims of the 'green revolution' and 'radical' land reforms. Based on official data which incidentally should be available for all states, Kosalram's report on Tamil Nadu is a forerunner of other studies along similar lines on the political economy of Indian agriculture to be featured in the *Social Scientist*.

In dissecting the "Social Structure of Pluralism", Rajani Kanth brings out the built-in biases and basic inadequacies of pluralist social science. The *Social Scientist* hopes to provide a vehicle for continuing critique of pro-establishment sociology both by analysing the works of dominant figures in the field and by careful study of the social institutions that perpetuate conservative social theory.

Warris Shah (1735-98) was the celebrated Punjabi poet whose best-known work is *Hira-Ranjha* (1766), a romantic ballad on the Hero and Leander theme. It reflected the social revolution of the times more vividly than any other contemporary writing, a point overlooked by most critics who treat it as nothing more than a great love story. Kishan Singh presents a deep and penetrating appreciation of the spirit of liberation that runs like a red thread through Warris Shah's poetry. We intend to publish a series of articles on the progressive trends in the literatures of the major Indian languages.

S. A. KOSALRAM

*Political Economy of Agriculture  
in Tamil Nadu*

IF one were to believe the two-volume Report of the Task Force on Agriculture, 1972-1984, enthusiastically titled *Towards a Greener Revolution*,<sup>1</sup> the main trend in agriculture in Tamil Nadu during the last two decades is "the definite transformation from a stage of chronic stagnancy to sustained growth, resulting in Green Revolution, which has been spreading in the State during the past five years".<sup>2</sup> A revolution is said to have invaded the occupation that contributes 33.79 per cent of the State's net domestic product and supports 73.3 per cent of the rural population.<sup>3</sup>

An extreme backwardness that did not conceal a growing instability and differentiation among the peasantry was certainly characteristic of agricultural production during the half-century preceding 1947.<sup>4</sup> Having registered our agreement with the first part of the Task Force's boast, let us examine briefly the second, the breakthrough to "sustained growth".

## CONDITION OF AGRICULTURE

The net sown area in Tamil Nadu is 62.81 lakh hectares, constituting about 48.3 per cent of the total geographical area. The area sown more than once a year represents 20 per cent of the net sown area. Of the gross cropped area, 76.2 per cent is under food crops. Vast tracts in the State are dependent on the vagaries of a poor and varying rainfall though according to official claims no less than 41.7 per cent of the net sown area is irrigated. Foodgrain production rose from 31.63 lakh tonnes in 1950-51 to 70.45 lakh tonnes in 1971-72.

TABLE I

THE ANNUAL AVERAGE PRODUCTION OF IMPORTANT CROPS DURING  
DIFFERENT PLAN PERIODS

Period	Foodgrains (Thousand tonnes)	Oilseeds (Thousand tonnes)	Sugarcane in Terms of gur (Thousand tonnes)	Cotton (Thousand bales)
1950-51	3168	817	330	226
1951-56	4088	812	295	276
1956-61	5050	1026	441	362
1961-66	5552	1056	711	351
1966-69	5327	901	1068	297
1970-71	7030	960	1148	358

Source : *Towards a Greener Revolution, Report of the Task Force on Agriculture, 1972-1984, Vol I State Planning Commission, Tamil Nadu, p 3.*

This year the monsoons have let a still dependent Tamil Nadu down. Owing to a meagre South West monsoon, the fall in the production of foodgrains in the *kharif* season is estimated at 2.5 lakh tonnes. The North East monsoon failed between October and November 1972 and was followed by a cloudburst in early December. Cyclonic winds and floods caused extensive damage to agricultural production in the districts of Tiruchirapalli, Thanjavur, Chingleput, North Arcot, South Arcot, Coimbatore and Salem and it is estimated that 220,000 acres of paddy, 50,000 acres of cotton, 12,000 acres of sugarcane and 22,000 acres of other crops have been ruined.

Agricultural production has certainly increased over the past two decades, although it has trailed behind the growth of population. A look at the growth rate of production of foodgrains shows that the main

increase has come in rice production which has grown at a rate of 4.1 per cent per annum between 1960-61 and 1970-71 and which accounts for more than one-third of the value of the total agricultural production in the State. The percentage of rice production to total cereal production has gradually increased, from 63 per cent in 1950-51 to 77 per cent in 1970-71. While the high yielding varieties such as ADT-27, Co 25, IR-8 and the one affectionately called *karuna* and their derivatives have certainly made a difference in some selected areas, notably Thanjavur, on the whole the High Yielding Variety Programme (HYVP) has not been marked by sustained growth in agriculture.

Millet crops have remained fairly stagnant over the period 1950-51 to 1970-71, with the millet crop with the highest growth rate, *cumbu*, showing an annual average compound growth rate of only 0.7 per cent over the period. The increase in the production of pulses, a meagre 0.7 per cent per annum between 1960-61 and 1970-71, has been solely because of an increase in the area under cultivation and even the starry-eyed predictions of the members of the Task Force on Agriculture envisage an 8.71 lakh tonne deficit at the end of the Perspective Plan period.

The tendency of the "Green Revolution" to bypass oilseed production has been particularly marked in Tamil Nadu, where oilseed output, 8.17 lakh tonnes in 1950-51 and 11.23 lakh tonnes in 1960-61, sank to 9.60 lakh tonnes in 1970-71. Productivity, which had fallen below the 1950-51 level in 1966-67, had not caught up with the pre-Plan figure in 1969-70.

Tamil Nadu produces 7.9 per cent of India's total cotton output (with 50 per cent of the yarn produced in the State delivered to other states or exported). The area under cotton crawled upwards, from 2.99 lakh hectares in 1950-51 to 4.06 lakh hectares in 1959-60. From 1964-65 to 1969-70, the annual average area under cotton sank to 3.63 lakh hectares, a figure which fell to 3.30 lakh hectares in 1970-71.

With a production that official sources claim is 3 lakh tonnes per annum, Tamil Nadu accounts for one-twelfth of the sugar production in India. The recovery rate of cane sugar, however, is only 7.87 per cent in Tamil Nadu, compared with 9.73 per cent in Karnataka and 10.72 per cent in Maharashtra. Consequently, despite the increase in the crushing capacity in some mills, the output of sugar has not shown any significant increase over the past six years. The quantity of cane crushed by 14 mills in 1965-66 was 26.88 lakh tonnes, producing 2.24 lakh tonnes of sugar with an average recovery of 8.46 per cent. During the year 1968-69, 15 sugar mills handled 41.59 lakh tonnes, producing only 3.31 lakh tonnes of sugar with a recovery of 7.95 per cent. During the period 1968-69 to 1971, the yield of cane in tonnes per hectare fell from 80.68 to 74.38, and the quantity of cane crushed fell from 41.69 lakh tonnes to 33.25 lakh tonnes.

The growth rates of area, production and productivity of selected crops are shown in the following table :

TABLE II

Crops	Growth rate in area cultivated (%)		Growth rate in production (%)		Growth rate in productivity (%)	
	1960-61	1970-71	1960-61	1970-71	1960-61	1970-71
	over 1950-51	over 1960-61	over 1950-51	over 1960-61	over 1950-51	over 1960-61
Rice	3.8	0.7	6.3	4.1	2.2	3.4
Cholam	2.4	-0.32	5.6	-1.42	3.1	-1.1
Cumbu	0.5	...	3.7	0.7	3.2	0.7
Maize	5.8	9.9	5.8	10.5	1.1	-0.4
Total cereals	2.6	0.2	5.3	2.7	2.8	...
Pulses	-0.3	0.7	5.0	0.9	5.2	...
Total food grains	2.3	0.2	5.3	2.7	3.0	...

Source : *Report of the Task Force on Agriculture, op. cit., pp 111-13.*

Table II shows that during the second decade there was a striking fall in the growth rates of production of all crops except maize, which showed a negative growth rate of productivity, and an equally striking fall in the growth rates of productivity of all crops except rice, whose growth rate of production registered a substantial fall.

### *New Strategy*

The official claim is that the new strategy in agriculture has completely transformed the practice of agriculture in the State. The Intensive Agricultural District Programme, introduced in 1960, met its well-known fate in Thanjavur District.<sup>5</sup> While rice production increased during this period, 'all-round growth' only meant uneven development within the district itself, and bigger bonuses for landlords and rich peasants.

The HYVP was introduced in Tamil Nadu in 1966-67 to increase the production of rice and millets. In the case of rice, exotic varieties like TN-1 have not done well at all, and there has been widespread hesitation in extending the area under IR-8, mainly because the grain quality is coarse. It must be noted that these high yielding varieties succeed only on well-drained soils. Where drainage facilities are lacking, these varieties have done badly. Another constraint on the use of these varieties is their high vulnerability to pests and diseases. Moreover, the high yielding strains are suitable for cultivation only during the *navarai* and *kar* seasons and there is no suitable variety yet for the *samba* season. While the official claim is that the HYVP expanded from 5.27 lakh acres in 1966-67 to 64.16 lakh acres in 1971-72, the validity of this claim is open to serious question. It has been pointed out, for example, that only 20 kgs of nitrogenous fertiliser have been applied per acre against the recommended dose of 50 to 75 kgs. Poor and lower-

middle peasants have found it impossible to cope with the expenditure involved in HYVP, an aspect that is dealt with later in this note.

An extremely high, and really undetermined, proportion of the soil still "looks up to the sky", as the people of Tamil Nadu say. Officials, however, say that the proportion is 56.5 per cent. There has been no systematic study to identify the different agro-climatic zones within the State with accuracy. The Task Force on Agriculture speaks of seven regions, based on total precipitation and its distribution, temperature ranges and soil types : (i) the East Coast Region (Chingleput, North Arcot, South Arcot and Thanjavur districts), which has an average rainfall of over 1000 mm and which is 'extensively' irrigated; (ii) the Northern Region (Salem and Dharmapuri districts), which receives a rainfall of 825 mm spread all over the season and has 80 per cent of its area solely dependent on this rainfall; (iii) the North West Region (Coimbatore), which receives a rainfall of only 700 mm and has 66 per cent of the cultivated area depending entirely on rain; (iv) the East Central Region (Tiruchirappalli and Madurai districts, excluding Palani taluk), which has an average rainfall of 850 mm and 70 per cent of its area rainfed; (v) the South West Region (Tirunelveli and Ramanathapuram districts), which receives 800 mm of rainfall and has 65 per cent of its cultivated area dependent on rain; (vi) the Southern Region (Kanyakumari district), which is fed by both the monsoons and receives a rainfall of over 1320 mm, and (vii) the Western Hill Region (Nilgiris district and Palani taluk of Madurai district), which receives over 1890 mm. Of these seven regions, dry farming is predominant in (ii), (iii), (iv) and (v) and in an undetermined proportion of the other three. The HYVP and the package programme have not made any significant impact on these dry areas.

### *Irrigation*

In Tamil Nadu, again according to official claims, the 'irrigated' area covers 41.7 per cent of the sown area and 19.2 per cent of the total geographical area. Under the classification adopted in the State, irrigation sources are of five classes : a first class source generally means a canal taking off from a perennial river or with sufficient spring flow throughout the year, or a tank supplied by such a canal; a second class source irrigates for more than 8 months; a third class source for more than 5 months; a fourth for more than 3 months; and a fifth for less than 3 months. While adopting this classification, State government officials are extremely reticent in providing data about the qualitative aspect of the irrigation under various classes.

Speaking broadly, districts such as Chingleput, South Arcot, and Ramanathapuram, which fall under the North East monsoon, are predominantly tank irrigated. About a million hectares are said to be irrigated by the 37,000 tanks scattered all over the State. The tanks are broadly classified as 'system' tanks, which get their supply from irrigation systems in addition to flows from their own catchments, and 'non-system' tanks,

which are entirely dependent on upland drainage. As most of these major and minor tanks are known to be infirm and have greatly reduced capacities owing to silting, and as repair and renovation work is extremely halting and indifferent, the official data on the subject is highly unreliable. With reference to Chingleput district, which has no large irrigation project, it is difficult to say at present what proportion of the total cultivated area is really irrigated, although the official data puts it at an incredible 75 per cent. North Arcot and Ramanathapuram present much the same problem.

Apart from Thanjavur and Tiruchi, South Arcot is the best irrigated district in the State. The major sources of irrigation in the district are rivers harnessed by *anicut*s built across them and the large number of streams fed by them; and tanks (over 2700) wells and spring channels. Well irrigation is also used substantially in this district.

By contrast, Thanjavur is almost completely canal-irrigated. The canals, natural formations in the delta which benefit from both the monsoons, make the district by far the most richly irrigated in the State. However no visitor to Thanjavur will fail to notice the massive neglect and wastage under Congress and DMK rule of the centuries-old Cauvery Delta System and the monumental *anicut*s. No major scheme has been undertaken to improve the existing irrigation system, though a proposal to modernise the canals with the help of expertise provided by the World Bank is "with the Central Government for approval". Wells and tanks are considered only minor sources in this district; the achievements of the Chola period have bred a lasting official complacency.

The interior areas, particularly Salem and Coimbatore districts, are irrigated chiefly by wells. There are said to be about 11 lakh wells in Tamil Nadu, of which nearly 9 lakhs, according to official claims, are energised. Coimbatore, where concentration of land ownership is extraordinarily high, is known for the cultivation of dry crops over large areas. Salem, which has four irrigation projects and over 2700 minor irrigation works apart from its wells, nevertheless presents a picture of abject agricultural backwardness—with the productivity of groundnut, Salem's premier crop, declining and tobacco and gingelly crops deteriorating in quality.

It is clear even from this brief commentary on irrigation that the progress of the 'controlled water supply' component of the HYVP in Tamil Nadu has been sluggish and bears no resemblance to the official claims on irrigated area.

As for the other components of the package, their production and pattern of utilisation are extremely unsatisfactory.

### *Fertiliser*

After Punjab, Tamil Nadu is the highest consumer of fertilisers in India. Though a large portion of the cultivated area under rainfed crops does not use chemical fertilisers at all, the consumption of fertilisers in-

creased from 13,000 tonnes in 1951-52 to 296,000 tonnes in 1971-72. Coimbatore, Thanjavur, South Arcot, Tiruchirapalli and Chingleput, in that order, consume the highest amount of fertilisers and together account for two-thirds of the State's total fertiliser consumption. The new strategy in agriculture has meant increased consumption of fertilisers; the non-fulfilment of the fertiliser requirement of a crop affects adversely the entire package, which is a combination of precariously balanced input ratios.

There are eight fertiliser manufacturing firms in Tamil Nadu : three nitrogenous and complex manufacturing plants and five phosphate producing units. Ammonium phosphate and sulphate production, carried out by EID Parry & Co at its plant in Ennore, has remained stagnant at 16,000 tonnes. The plant has a production capacity of 51,000 tonnes. The Neyveli Lignite Corporation in South Arcot works at about a third of its 1.54 lakh tonne capacity. Superphosphate production, which has been playing around 1.5 lakh tonnes, is carried out in plants which work at 50 per cent capacity.

Fertilisers have been effectively kept out of the reach of large sections of the rural population, since chiefly landlords, capitalist farmers and rich peasants have been able to corner the credit facilities to obtain fertilisers. They get the type of fertiliser they need when they need it.

### *Other Inputs*

Calculating at 12 tonnes per hectare for irrigated foodcrops, 25 tonnes per hectare for irrigated commercial crops and half the dosages for rainfed crops, the State's total requirement of organic manure works out to be 1303 lakh tonnes. The present shortfall in output is 1165 lakh tonnes, a shortfall of 89 per cent.

Official claims are ambitious as regards the production of improved seed varieties. There are 59 State Seed Farms covering a total area of 5432 acres. The Agricultural Department intends to cover 33 per cent of the total area with improved seeds each year, 11 per cent with seeds supplied by the Department through Agricultural Depots and 22 per cent through natural spread. At present, even the glimmerings of a seed production programme exist only for rice and millet varieties; there are already complaints of deteriorating quality and the mixing of low quality seeds in consignments of high yielding seed varieties.

Coming to mechanisation, Tamil Nadu has about 7000 tractors, which ranks it third among the states in terms of the per acre utilisation of tractors. Within the State, Coimbatore district has the most tractors, followed by Thanjavur and South Arcot. By 1971-72, the Agro-Industries Corporation had set up five tractor repair stations. The adverse social impact of even the present degree of tractor utilisation is discussed later in this note.

Institutional credit is another package input that finds its way into official boasts and landlord and rich peasant pockets. At the end of

1970-71, it was said that 6058 primary societies, of which 14 per cent were dormant, covered the credit needs of 'one half' of the rural population. Tamil Nadu, official sources say, ranks first among the states in respect of commercial bank advances to the agricultural sector, with advances working out to Rs 80.70 per hectare of the gross cropped area. Official reports cannot hide the fact that institutional credit has contributed a great deal to intensifying a more characteristic institution of the rural areas, the concentration in landownership.

An important aspect of the development of capitalism in agriculture has been the intensification of disparities between regions. The relative development of areas of Coimbatore, Thanjavur and South Arcot is set against the utter destitution and backwardness of areas such as Salem, Dharmapuri, Ramanathapuram and parts of every district, including large parts of that 'revolutionary' district, Coimbatore. The reasons are not to be sought, as official sources do, purely in terms of low rainfall and other agro-climatic factors, or slightly inferior soil types in the backward areas; but in terms of how capitalism, which needs the impoverishment of the masses of the agrarian population as a pedestal on which to develop, necessarily involves a greatly accentuated uneven development.

### *Power Cut*

This year it has been a power famine, comprehensive in its reach and ferocious in the depth of its attack.<sup>6</sup> The hardship and misery of the masses of the agrarian population have deepened and intensified in a frightening way. For industry in Tamil Nadu, the power cut was 75 per cent. For agriculture, power used to be available for five hours a day.

In many parts of the State one could see peasants squatting day and night in the fields, waiting, praying and cursing for the water that comes so fitfully. Especially in areas where cultivation depends on sub-soil water for irrigation, crops worth several lakhs of rupees have been starved of water and lost. The power cut has knocked the hope out of lakhs of middle peasant families. Thousands of rich peasants have been adversely affected. The brunt of the burden is, of course, on the rural poor. It is their crops that are ruined first; it is they who suffer most from the shooting prices of foodgrains and essential commodities such as kerosene, edible oils and so on; it is they who will be ruined most thoroughly by the exorbitant rates charged by the rice mills for hulling paddy.

An aspect of the new situation is that at a time when government officials are singing paeans to the 'Green Revolution', many peasants and even capitalist landlords in the districts of Salem, Dharmapuri, Ramanathapuram, South and North Arcot and even Coimbatore are switching back to bullocks to draw water from the wells. With no prospect of the power famine receding until June-July 1973 and with a fertiliser shortage already pronounced, it will be extremely difficult for the votaries of

the 'Green Revolution' to save the 'enthusiasm for the crash programme' that is being scotched before their very eyes.

The cost of all this will be paid, of course, by the rural poor and the lower-middle peasantry, with marked-up compound interest.

It is in such circumstances that the DMK Government in Tamil Nadu, vying in propaganda with the Government of India, continues to hand out a stylish brochure which exults: "Much progress has been made to relieve the farmers from the mercy of the monsoon. . . the whole of Tamil Nadu presents a new look. This is a period when the sun turns its face towards Tamil Nadu. The warmth of the sun is exhilarating."<sup>7</sup>

### AGRARIAN RELATIONS

There are two ways of looking at social and economic phenomena: one consists in holding fast to the appearance and accepting the explanation given by authorities; the other consists in trying to go beyond the appearance and penetrate the real social relationships that lie at the heart of these phenomena. To judge from official claims, reports and a recent official-sponsored study,<sup>8</sup> one would imagine that the problem of agrarian relations has been solved in Tamil Nadu. But what is the reality?

From the data provided by the Census of 1971 and by the State Planning Commission, one may roughly estimate the agrarian population of Tamil Nadu to be 210 lakhs.<sup>9</sup> From this, the numerical significance of the various agrarian classes (including the members of their families) can be tentatively identified.

Landlords—those who own land, do not engage in the labour of cultivation and live by exploiting the peasantry parasitically—constitute not more than 3 per cent of the agrarian population and number (along with the members of their families) anything upto 630,000. The growing rich peasant class, forming 5 to 7 per cent of the agrarian population, numbers 1,050,000 to 1,470,000. The middle peasants—who in good years make ends meet but always have poverty knocking at the door—form about 20 per cent of the agrarian population, or about 4,200,000. Poor peasants and agricultural workers, who constitute 70 per cent of the agrarian population, make up more than 14,700,000.

These *very tentative* figures draw attention to the magnitude of the problem of agrarian relations in Tamil Nadu.

In every one of the 15,735 villages in the State, one finds the spectre of landlordism staring at production and the people. There is also a growing instability and differentiation among the peasantry, a contradictory growth of *concentration* on the one hand and *parcellisation* on the other.

Even official sources do not deny the tremendous concentration of land and wealth that strangles the agrarian economy, although they take shelter behind the fact that up-to-date data on the extent of the concentration is not available. Up-to-date statistical data will not be available

before the beginning of 1974. For the first time, the Census of Agriculture conducted by the Government of India has taken up a complete enumeration of the number and size distribution of the 'operational holdings' (as distinct from the ownership holdings), along with detailed enumeration of the area under crops, land utilisation, irrigation, tenure and tenancy.<sup>10</sup> When the results spew out of the computer, it will be difficult to conceal the reality of landlordism and the growing concentration of 'operational holdings'; or to declaim as Professor K S Sonachalam of Annamalai University did in his study, *Land Reforms in Tamil Nadu: Evaluation and Implementation*, financed by the Research Programme Committee of the Planning Commission: "All these figures indicate a definite broadening of the already broad-based ownership."<sup>11</sup>

The State Government still maintains the pretence that unlike in other states, land reform legislation has been implemented in a 'revolutionary' way in Tamil Nadu. The Land Ceiling Act of 1961 was modified in 1971 and amended five times after that. The original Act, imposing a ceiling of 30 standard acres on the landholding of a 'family' received the President's assent in April 1962 and was given retrospective effect from April 6, 1960. In 1964, the Act was struck down by the Supreme Court and revived a few months later. Several estimates of surplus land were made. The Land Revenue Reforms Committee estimated a surplus of 2.55 million acres, which it later scaled down to 1.25 million. The official estimate furnished to the Assembly in the early sixties was 2.82 lakhs. Upto the end of September, 1972, with the new ceiling of 15 acres on the statute book, a mere 22,029 acres had been assigned to 11,309 persons. The statement below, based on the data provided by the Department of Revenue, Government of Tamil Nadu, shows the progress made in the assignment of surplus land:

	(in acres)
Extent taken possession of	28,924
Extent covered by stay	2,157
Extent covered by 'B' notices	1,586
Extent covered by 'D' notices	2,006
Net available land for assignment	23,175
Extent assigned upto September 1972	22,029
Balance	1,146
Number of persons assigned surplus land	11,309

As for the performance of the Tamil Nadu Record of Tenancy Right Act of 1969, the number of tenants registered upto the end of September, 1972 was a mere 381,823. About the performance of this Act—and many of its kind in the other states—the recent Planning Commission report on agrarian relations, a trendy exercise in crisis economics, is a useful guide: "So far as the tenancy reforms are concerned, the legal protection granted to tenants is illusory . . . The status and conditions of the record of (tenancy) rights is no better . . ." Following the Record of Tenancy Rights Act, there has been large-scale eviction of

tenants by landlords and rich peasants in many districts.

In making some radical-sounding admissions and in spinning out tales about the need to 'involve the people' in the implementation of land reforms (at the 'grass roots level'), the Central and State Planning Commissions conceal the main aspect of the reality, the class policy of the state of the bourgeoisie and landlords. "These legislations, even if implemented honestly, are not going to ensure land to the landless agricultural labourers nor the land-poor dwarf peasants. They are at best another step in the drive of the big bourgeois-led Government to widen its rural landlord base, by getting land released from the present few and make it available to a large number of the growing new rural rich... the democratic movement cannot rely on the promised legislation or on the present ruling classes."<sup>12</sup>

It appears that the capitalist mode of production is superimposed on feudal and semi-feudal relations. It is clear that no legislative measure has made even the shadow of a dent on land monopoly in Tamil Nadu. Land reform has failed strikingly to abolish precapitalist agrarian relations, rack-renting, usurious rates of interest, payments derived from extra-economic pressures and the various other forms of exploitation to which the peasants are subjected. The authority of the village revenue officials continues to be a powerful bulwark of the tyranny of landlordism over the peasant masses.

In general, the impact of Congress and DMK agrarian policies on agrarian relations in the State is clear. They have encouraged the growth of capitalist features while preserving feudal and semi-feudal relations. They have persuaded the landlords to offer concessions to the times: by 'converting' their plots into plantations, dairy and breeding farms (initially exempted from the ceiling); by transferring their land to their kith and kin including minor children; by moving the courts for injunctions, 'B' and 'D' notices; and by taking to various devices to attack the rural poor.

To cite one instance: the village of Valivalam lies close to Thiruvavur in East Thanjavur. The temple of *Hridayakamalanathar* dominates the village, a prosperous landlord surrounded by a retinue of coconut trees. The deity is only a *benami* for the human landlord who has been its devoted trustee for years, who has under his care, as a token of a formidable devotion, 16 trusts which sprang up after the Land Ceiling Act of 1961 and cover more than 500 acres of good paddy land. Quite apart from this sacred trust, the landlord has under his 'personal cultivation' no fewer than 300 acres. The landlord took care initially to see that the 'trust lands' were leased out to 'tenants' strictly in accordance with the law. That most of the 'tenants' were the landlord's domestic servants, drivers, clerks, barbers, shop-keepers, hangers-on and many others unconnected with the land was, of course, of no consequence to the law. It was only after a hard and sustained campaign and fight conducted recently by the agricultural workers in the area under the leadership of

the Agricultural Workers' Union and the Communist Party of India (Marxist)—a fight that had to overcome the disruptive activity of the Sarvodaya, which came in the name of fighting the landlord—that a substantial portion of this land was let out to actual agricultural workers who were recognised as tenants. It would be interesting to see how all this land figures in the table of 'operational holdings', number and size of distribution, to be brought out by the Tamil Nadu Agricultural Census as part of the World Census of Agriculture.

Congress and DMK policies have attempted to develop the capitalist mode of production in agriculture by offering loans for 'agricultural improvement', for digging wells, for buying high yielding seeds and fertiliser to the rural gentry—in other words, by tying credit and all the other benefits of the new strategy to the assurance of private property.

There can be no doubt at all who gathers the fruits of this policy. In almost all the districts, a section of landlords has adopted in varying degrees the capitalist mode of production, combining this with the old feudal and semi-feudal relations. A numerically small class of capitalist farmers has emerged in those districts where the package programme or cash crops have made some headway. In Thanjavur, Tiruchirappalli, South Arcot, Chingleput and Coimbatore districts, the growth of the rich peasant class has been striking.

The differentiation of the peasantry has developed the latter's extreme groups at the expense of the middle peasantry and has created an agrarian bourgeoisie. The capitalist landlords and the well-to-do peasantry in Tamil Nadu have taken increasingly to the cultivation of commercial crops. Concentrating a tremendous amount of land in their hands, employing a farming technique much above the average, combining in themselves the roles of merchant and usury capital, accumulating capital that is directed towards buying land, farm implements and inputs of the new package or commercial and industrial enterprises, the agrarian bourgeoisie vie with the feudal and semi-feudal landlords to become "masters of the contemporary countryside".<sup>13</sup>

There has been a change in the technology of agriculture; a limited expansion of irrigation, particularly lift irrigation; electrification, and the introduction of pumpsets and tractors in the last five years. There are over 11 lakh wells in Tamil Nadu, of which nearly 6 lakhs are said to be energised. There are 7000 tractors concentrated in three or four districts. There has been an increase in the use of other instruments of mechanisation in agriculture. However, compared with states such as Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, "the level of mechanisation in Tamil Nadu is very low".<sup>14</sup>

What has been the impact of mechanisation on agrarian employment? If one is to believe the Report of the Task Force, "mechanisation of Agriculture will increase the investment capacities and consequently induce the flourishing of rural industries, thereby creating more job opportunities. . . ."<sup>15</sup> This might be apt from the view point of the theories

that crowd the Conference Hall of the State Planning Commission, but life and practice demonstrate that the tractors introduced as part of the package of the 'Green Revolution' have thrown hundreds of agricultural workers and poor peasants out of work.

This is by no means the only major impact of the 'Green Revolution' in Tamil Nadu. The benefits of the increased production and the new inputs have gone exclusively to the rural gentry, the landlords, the capitalist farmers and the rich peasants, thus widening the gulf between the rural gentry and the masses of the rural population. This aspect has caused much concern to Wolf Ladejinsky and Francine Frankel, specialists serving US imperialism, who have studied the impact of the package programme on agrarian relations in Thanjavur District and have warned the Government of India about the 'explosive' situation that is developing as a result of the 'Green Revolution'.

The growth of *concentration* on the one hand and *pauperisation* on the other can be easily observed even by the student of surface reality in every village in Tamil Nadu.

### *Middle Peasantry*

Tamil Nadu has a large middle peasantry whose ranks are being steadily eroded by the development of capitalism in agriculture. While a small upper section of the middle peasantry passes into the ranks of the well-to-do peasantry every year, the bulk of the middle peasantry faces unprecedentedly hard times. With their land liable to be lost at the first sign of a setback, with their tenancy rights insecure, with very few savings or virtually none, with a large and growing indebtedness, with the increasing necessity to sell part of their labour power to others, the hundreds of thousands of lower-middle peasants in Tamil Nadu are in a precarious position, with bankruptcy and ruin lurking a stone's throw away.

### *Rural Poor*

The completely dispossessed, the people who have neither land nor money nor any means of livelihood except a commodity called labour-power; and the partially dispossessed, the people who have just a little land or a little money, who eat up more than they earn and live in distress the year round, make up the mass of the agrarian population which is, objectively, most interested in changing the system from top to bottom.

The growth of the rural bourgeoisie has been more than matched by the growth of the rural proletariat. The extent of proletarianisation is particularly striking in districts such as Thanjavur, Chingleput, Madurai, Coimbatore and Kanyakumari. In some areas of Coimbatore, with the growth of 'garden farming' and the cultivation of cash crops, the proletarianisation of the peasantry has proceeded with remarkable rapidity. At dawn during the agricultural seasons, one sees on a small stretch of road in these parts a sea of labouring humanity ranging anything upto 20,000, going to work for wages. This is one half of the face

of developing capitalism in agriculture.

The Census of 1971 shows that the proportion of agricultural labourers to the total 'rural workers'<sup>16</sup> rose from 21.81 per cent in 1961 to 36.56 per cent in 1971. The primary data provided by the Census, while it must be used with extreme care and is subject to a measure of unreliability,<sup>17</sup> does provide statistical proof of terrible reality of *pauperisation* in Tamil Nadu.

The decrease in the number of 'cultivators' and the increase in the number of agricultural labourers are shown below :

TABLE III

INCREASE OR DECREASE IN THE NUMBER OF CULTIVATORS AND  
AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS, DISTRICT-WISE, BETWEEN 1961 AND 1971

District	Cultivators		Agricultural Labourers	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1 Madras	+ 957	..	+ 456	..
2 Chingleput	- 96,184	- 28.71	+ 89,000	+ 36.90
3 North Arcot	-245,627	- 32.50	+165,633	+ 66.08
4 South Arcot	-167,219	- 24.20	+ 64,052	+ 16.00
5 Salem and Dharmapuri	-307,446	- 28.79	+241,634	+ 96.48
6 Coimbatore	-102,146	- 19.67	+301,036	+ 111.79
7 Nilgiri	- 26,090	- 73.41	- 6,289	- 30.39
8 Madurai	-149,186	- 26.20	+233,262	+ 79.62
9 Tiruchi	-230,587	- 26.74	+114,256	+ 44.48
10 Thanjavur	-120,344	- 24.33	+ 95,944	+ 21.51
11 Ramanath- puram	-243,881	- 39.61	+107,359	+ 64.02
12 Tirunelveli	-147,548	- 33.66	+160,168	+ 79.81
13 Kanyakumari	- 14,745	- 20.24	+ 95,180	+ 304.41
Tamil Nadu (Total)	-1,849,833	- 28.64	+1,661,626	+ 58.75

Source : Censuses of 1961 and 1971 for primary data.

Note : District (1) refers to the Madras urban area.

The rapid increase in the number of agricultural labourers in relation to the number of 'cultivators' is expressed in Table IV :

TABLE IV  
RATIO OF CULTIVATORS TO AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

District	1961	1971
1 Madras	0.54	1.63
2 Chingleput	1.39	0.72
3 North Arcot	3.01	1.23
4 South Arcot	1.73	1.13
5 Salem and Dharmapuri	4.26	1.55
6 Coimbatore	1.93	0.73
7 Nilgiris	1.72	0.66
8 Madurai	1.94	0.80
9 Tiruchi	3.36	1.71
10 Thanjavur	1.11	0.69
11 Ramanathapuram	3.67	1.35
12 Tirunelveli	2.19	0.81
13 Kanyakumari	2.33	0.46
Tamil Nadu (Total)	2.29	1.03

Source : Censuses of 1961 and 1971 for primary data.

The decrease in the proportion of 'cultivators' to 'total workers' and the increase in the proportion of agricultural labourers to 'total workers' in every part of Tamil Nadu are shown below :

TABLE V  
PROPORTION OF CULTIVATORS AND AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS TO  
TOTAL WORKERS

District	Cultivators		Agricultural Labourers	
	1961	1971	1961	1971
1 Madras	0.02	0.15	0.04	0.09
2 Chingleput	35.14	24.35	25.31	33.68
3 North Arcot	51.44	38.26	17.06	31.23
4 South Arcot	49.46	41.73	28.66	37.00
5 Salem & Dharmapuri	54.70	34.72 & 57.26	12.66	28.03 & 26.31
6 Coimbatore	30.32	23.35	15.73	31.93
7 Nilgiris	18.93	4.93	11.02	7.51
8 Madurai	39.02	28.91	20.07	36.19
9 Tiruchi	54.84	44.32	16.34	26.03
10 Thanjavur	36.28	29.18	32.71	42.24
11 Ramanathapuram	53.02	36.45	14.44	26.95
12 Tirunelveli	35.21	24.82	16.12	30.80
13 Kanyakumari	20.75	16.58	8.90	36.08
Tamil Nadu (Total)	42.07	31.26	18.42	30.46

Source : Censuses of 1961 and 1971 for primary data.

The substantial change in the ratio of agricultural labouring women to agricultural labouring men in all parts of the State in favour of men is further evidence of the rapid impoverishment and proletarianisation of the poor and lower-middle peasantry. The experience of proletarianisation in Tamil Nadu is that when a family loses its land, the men are the first to swell the ranks of the labourers, that is, those who find employment by selling their labour-power. Relatively, the women get left behind and suffer the worst consequences of growing unemployment.

TABLE VI  
RATIO OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURING WOMEN TO MEN

District	1961	1971
1 Madras	0.07	0.36
2 Chingleput	0.87	0.49
3 North Arcot	1.34	0.75
4 South Arcot	0.94	0.48
5 Salem & Dharmapuri	0.96	0.63
6 Coimbatore	0.74	0.70
7 Nilgiris	0.91	0.63
8 Madurai	0.93	0.65
9 Tiruchi	1.12	0.76
10 Thanjavur	0.79	0.40
11 Ramanathapuram	1.27	0.75
12 Tirunelveli	1.22	0.75
13 Kanyakumari	0.34	0.80

Source : Censuses of 1961 and 1971 for primary data.

For seven months in the year, the agricultural workers and poor peasants exist at a level that is indisputably below 'subsistence'. Hundreds of thousands wander about in chill penury, without a place to go. They must depend on the employed members within their families for subsistence. The standard of living of lakhs of families is thus further depressed.

Wages are atrociously low in most parts of Tamil Nadu. Agronomic conditions, the condition of irrigation and other inputs, land utilisation, the land-man ratio and labour supply have their obvious impact on wages. But where nominal wages have increased substantially over the last decade, it is invariably because of the bitter and heroic struggles of the agricultural workers through their class organisation—as in Thanjavur and, more recently, in parts of Coimbatore and Madurai. In Kanyakumari district, agronomic conditions and the political influence of the great democratic peasant movement of Kerala have been responsible for the increase in wages.

The lean period for the rural poor is a very prosperous one for the big landlords, the big grain-merchants and the moneylenders. Apart from doing a roaring business in the grain trade and in usury, these persons

have an unrivalled opportunity to exploit want. They get *panchayat* contracts for digging canals, for road repairs and other earth-moving jobs, for which they employ distress labour-power at distress wages.

The poor peasant might own a tiny plot of land and a few farm implements; or might own no land but only a few farm implements and might be forced to lease in land from the landlord. As a rule, he cannot live without selling some part of his labour-power. If he is a tenant, the threat of eviction hangs heavily over him and any day he might be hurled into the ranks of the landless.

In Tamil Nadu, the proportion of the agrarian population living on some form of *tenancy* seems to be substantially higher than the all-India average, which has been tentatively estimated at 15-20 per cent.<sup>18</sup> If share-cropping and other forms of concealed tenancy are included, the proportion will be substantially higher. Since there are no proper records, the dwarf-poor peasants have been evicted on a massive scale in many districts over the last decade.

Official sources claim that the work of the Small Farmers' Development Agency Scheme in South Arcot, Madurai and Tirunelveli districts<sup>19</sup> is *intended* to reverse the trend of impoverishment and appreciably improve the condition of the rural poor and the lower-middle peasantry. Even official sources find it difficult to deny the easily observable fact that "while the big and medium-sized farmers are taking advantage of all the facilities made available under the development programmes, the small farmers are still starved of their basic needs. The small farmers are not in a position to get any credit through the co-operatives and other agencies. . . . Unless effective measures are initiated, the gap between big and small farmers will go on widening at an alarming rate with all its socio-economic implications for the immediate future".<sup>20</sup>

The rural poor are subjected to the most depraved exploitation by the moneylender, lending at rates of interest ranging from 50 to 300 per cent. There is no reliable estimate of rural indebtedness in Tamil Nadu, though it is unlikely to be anything less than Rs 500 crores. Usury capital continues to grow parasitically, greatly impoverishing the mode of production in agriculture everywhere.

Landlordism and the development of capitalism in agriculture have forced the masses of the Tamil peasantry to sink a grade lower in the social scale, and are keeping them in appalling poverty from which there is no question of freeing themselves without a long-drawn, tortuous and countrywide fight.

So much for a brief review of the objective conditions of the masses of the agrarian population.

Subjectively, too, they have begun to make an impact. In those parts of Tamil Nadu where the class organisations of the agricultural labourers and the poor peasants—the All-India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) and the Agricultural Workers' Union—have been developed to an extent, as in East Thanjavur, parts of Coimbatore, Madurai and South Arcot dis-

tricts, the spark has been lit. This aspect will be dealt with in a later note.

*(The writer is grateful to Professor C T Kurien of the Economics Department, Madras Christian College, for lending his working papers on aspects of the agrarian situation in various districts in Tamil Nadu.)*

<sup>1</sup> *The Perspective Plan for Tamil Nadu : Towards A Greener Revolution*, Report of the Task Force on Agriculture, 1972-1984, Vols I and II, State Planning Commission, Madras.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>4</sup> See George Blyn, *Agricultural Trends in India, 1891-1947 : Output, Availability and Productivity*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1966, for a statistical framework; *Some South Indian Villages* edited by Gilbert Slater and published by the University of Madras in 1918; *Some South Indian Villages : A Resurvey* edited by P J Thomas and K C Ramakrishnan and published by the University in 1940; and *Report on Agricultural Indebtedness* by W R S Sathyanathan, ICS, submitted to the Government of Madras in 1935.

<sup>5</sup> Wolf Ladejinsky, the Ford Foundation specialist who studied the suitability of Thanjavur's tenurial conditions—including the condition of tenancy—to the 'Green Revolution', concluded that Thanjavur was "a district with one of the nation's worst land tenure systems. . . If land tenure conditions were a part of the criteria for selecting a package district. . . Thanjavur wouldn't qualify at all". The Tamil Nadu Government's indignant response to Ladejinsky's scathing criticism of the tenurial conditions of Thanjavur is indicated in *A Study of Tenurial Conditions in Package Districts* by Wolf Ladejinsky, Planning Commission, Government of India, 1965. Francine Frankel of USAID found that although 'economic gains', which were not impressive in the case of paddy, had accrued, they had been accompanied by the tremendous 'political cost'. The poor peasants, the share-croppers and the agricultural workers were adversely affected by the 'Green Revolution'. She found that the Kilvenmani massacre "had much deeper roots in the progressive polarisation between landowners and labourers that started as early as the first Communist-led agitations in 1948", and mentions that an administrator told her about the situation in East Thanjavur: "We are at the beginning of trouble yet." See *India's Green Revolution : Economic Gains and Political Costs* by Francine Frankel, Princeton University Press, USA, and Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1971.

<sup>6</sup> V P Chintan, "Why This Power Cut", a Tamil pamphlet published by the Tamil Nadu Committee of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions in March 1973, for an excellent assessment of the causes of the power famine and its impact.

<sup>7</sup> This is, of course, an allusion to the DMK's election symbol.

<sup>8</sup> K S Sonachalam, *Land Reforms in Tamil Nadu : Evaluation and Implementation*, sponsored by the Planning Commission, Research Programme Committee and published by the Oxford and IBH Publishing Co, 1970.

<sup>9</sup> Out of a population of 41.2 million in Tamil Nadu, the rural population was 28.7 million in 1971 (*Source* : Census of 1971). The estimate of 21 million as the agrarian population was arrived at on the basis of the State Planning Commission's estimate that about 73 per cent of the rural population is supported by agriculture.

<sup>10</sup> The Tamil Nadu Agricultural Census as part of the Agricultural Census in India has been conducted with reference to the agricultural year, July 1970 to June 1971. The field work has been done by the field staff of the Revenue and Land

Records Department and supervised by the officers of the Revenue, Land Records, Agriculture and Statistical Departments. A nucleus Census unit has been set up under the overall control of the State Agricultural Census Authority. The major data has been collected and will be classified in seven tables : (i) Number and area of operational holdings operated by size class, in 12 size groups, (ii) Holdings reporting irrigation, and area irrigated by size class of operational holdings, (iii) Number and area of holdings by tenure and size, owner-operated, (iv) Number and area of holdings by tenure and size, tenant-operated or rented, (v) Area under different land uses by size distribution of holdings and a nine-fold classification of land utilisation, (vi) Source-wise area irrigated by size distribution of holdings, and (vii) Area under principal crops by size distribution of holdings. The processing of the data is expected to be completed by the end of 1973 and the results to be available in the beginning of 1974. It is learnt that there are about 5.5 million 'operational holdings' in the State excluding Madras, Nilgiris and Kanyakumari districts. While this is undoubtedly the first serious Census of agriculture, the indices and criteria adopted by the Census do not seem sufficiently to have taken into account the *scale and type of agriculture* as the basis of classification. For a classic discussion on this point, see V I Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1967, pp 71-190.

<sup>11</sup> K S Sonachalam, *op. cit.*, p 21.

<sup>12</sup> P Sundarayya, "Congress and Land Ceilings", *People's Democracy*, July 30, 1972.

<sup>13</sup> The expression is Lenin's. See *Development of Capitalism in Russia*, *op. cit.*, p 180.

<sup>14</sup> *Towards A Greener Revolution*, *op. cit.*, Vol II, p 32.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p 41.

<sup>16</sup> Note that the classification, 'workers', adopted by the Census is partly unreliable. The definition adopted is : "A 'worker' is a person whose main activity is participation in any economically productive work by his physical or mental activity. Work involves not only actual work but effective supervision and direction of work". This definition means that a section of landlords, who are utter parasites, and capitalist farmers have been included in the classification, 'rural workers'. Only certain 'absentee landlords' seem to have been excluded.

<sup>17</sup> Apart from the element of unreliability that enters the data from the improper definition of 'workers', the Census data on 'cultivators' and 'agricultural labourers' present another serious problem. According to the Census authorities, the 1961 definitions of these two categories are not strictly comparable with the 1971 definitions. Speaking broadly, the 1961 definition seems to have inflated the figures on 'cultivators' by adopting a liberal definition. For example, it was noticed that an agricultural worker declared himself to be a 'cultivator' and was counted as such even if he cultivated just a couple of cents in his backyard. It is one thing to allow for this element of unreliability in the Census data on the increase in the number of agricultural labourers. It is wholly another to pretend, as some of the Census authorities do, that for this reason, one cannot read into the data on 'cultivators' and 'agricultural labourers' the conclusion that pauperisation has taken place on a large scale between 1961 and 1971. The trend of large-scale pauperisation and proletarianisation of the poor and middle peasantry is conclusively established by the Census data.

<sup>18</sup> See *Report of the Group on Agrarian Structure*, Second All-India Conference of the Indian School of Social Sciences on the theme, "Character of State Power in India", Tambaram, Madras, September 1971.

<sup>19</sup> The Government of Tamil Nadu sanctioned this scheme in the three districts in January 1971. According to the Report of the Task Force on Agriculture, Vol II, cited above : "it is too early to pass any judgment on their achievements or their shortcomings". (p 118).

<sup>20</sup> *Towards A Greener Revolution*, *op. cit.*, Vol II, pp 114-115.

RAJANI KANTH

## *On the Social Structure of Pluralism*

IT is no easy task, even in the comparatively fluid world of sociological parlance, to expose the rambling incoherence of pluralist social science. For one thing pluralism defies analysis, detracts reason and distorts understanding. It has no methodological epicentre, no historical overview, no pivotal standpoint or empirical focus. It is a miasma *sui generis*, revolving around the abyss of its own emptiness, spinning against the rocks of fact into the far reaches of speculation, now lit by a chance inspiration, now smothered by an unsplendid turn of obfuscation, but ever creative, ever imaginative, ever aspiring after novelty until fact and fiction are finally united and made inseparable in one grand plural image. And yet it suffers continuously: suffers from a lack of centre, lack of system, stamina, integrity, purpose, passion and perseverance. It abounds in assumptions, it is empty in hypotheses; it regales with generalisation, it is lost in specifics; it thrives on empiricism, it falls by theory. Its contradictions are more latent than manifest, inherent than acquired, irresoluble than solvent. It shies from the normative, it is patently ideological; it pretends idealism, it is full of material compromises; it protests to reveal, it prefers to camouflage.

It is a complicated task, then, to take pluralist sociology head-on : for instead of a collection there results only a scattered array of responses, each more evasive than the other. For like an amoeba, pluralist thought splits and subdivides on approach, assuming contradictory positions simultaneously, offering multitudinous images of resistance. In many ways like the formal structure of myth, it is ever adaptive and ever totalising, for, lacking real substance it must take on the impression, however muted, of the first really hard hit of facts it encounters. If we nevertheless joust this hydra-headed protoplasm across the arena of this paper it is admittedly with the gravest apprehensions and misgivings, spurred on by the knowledge that science must march on, relentless of the ogres that obstruct intellectual passage, deny critical access, and guard the seemingly impenetrable fortresses of unreason.

For the purposes of this paper which has no pretention to extensiveness in scope or scale, we choose our predators with selective emphasis laying ourself bare to charges of inadequate exposition, imprecise construction and incomplete comment.

## II

We initiate our discussion with an examination of a paper entitled "Inequality and Social Change"<sup>1</sup> which deals admittedly with the pressing social issues of today. The monograph which was originally delivered in the form of a lecture begins with the statement :

The study of inequality occupies a central place in sociology and has, in a sense, provided the main impetus to the growth of the discipline itself.

It is necessary at the very beginning to pause and reflect. A random survey of sociological literature in general, contemporary sociology in particular, and Indian sociology in paraparticular, only betrays the paucity of meaningful sociological adventures in the field of inequality and social change : the stress, of course, being on the term meaningful. For, certainly it is possible to sustain that the leading lights of sociological theory, Comte, Pareto, Mosca, Durkheim and Max Weber were consumed by the theoretical appeal of social inequality : in the sense of aiming to sustain, prolong and perpetrate it. History must surely stand in error; for if the 'main impetus' to the 'growth of the discipline' was so patently ideological, then what of its contemporary practitioners who, instead of rejecting this tradition, claim all the more pride in stressing continuities within it? Ironically, as if to demonstrate our contention, subsequent confirmation is offered :

Rather, it is the social scientist's task to point out that the real choice is not between equality and inequality : in the real world what one chooses is very often one type of inequality in place of the other.

This is unmistakably the kind of consolation offered by Messrs Mosca<sup>2</sup> and Pareto<sup>3</sup> in their respective sociologies : that the formulas change but the fact of oligarchy remains. Human nature demands

inequality and society guarantees it. In the words of a not unsympathetic critic,<sup>4</sup>

The modern theoreticians of elites or oligarchies, G Mósca, V Pareto, R Michels, are in part the legitimate descendants of classical political philosophy. But at the same time they are critics of parliamentary democracy and socialist utopia. These political philosophers have never doubted the inequality of citizens in wealth and power. To them, the problem was not to eliminate natural or social inequalities, but to assure the accession of the most worthy to the positions of responsibility, and, at the same time, to establish reciprocal relations of authority and obedience, of benevolence and confidence between the governors and the governed.

It is naturally to be wondered whether there has been any break in continuity of the sociological tradition since Pareto, Mosca or Michels.

### III

Pursuing our phantom of inequality and social change we hit upon an explanation of pluralism offered by the author :

The pluralists adopt a different position. They would not deny the importance of economic distinctions. In fact Weber, unlike many of his interpreters, assigned a central place to class in sociological analysis. But he argued that status and power were also important and not wholly determined by economic factors. He tried to substantiate his arguments by a rather wide range of comparative studies than had been undertaken by Marx. . . . He believed that class, status and power were closely interdependent although none of them could be fully explained by the others.

Let us examine what is being said here. We are told that class, status and power are all relevant factors. We do not disagree. But if we then ask the question : relevant for what? Then the only pluralist answer can be : relevant for the location of the individual in society! But Marx used the term class not to locate individuals, but to locate social forces. The relevance of the concept of class is precisely for determining the structure of inequality and the locus of social change. Thus the Marxian theory of class conflict is precisely the theory of historical change. On the other hand Max Weber's,<sup>5</sup> or the pluralist, classification is only a descriptive sociology aiming at an enumeration of social facts *per se*. The classical pluralist mistake is very simple. By separating the problem of inequality from the problem of social change, pluralism loses forever the vital key to social understanding. The triumph of the Marxian insight lies in the simple fact that it recognises that social inequality is the nucleus of social change.

And as for the charge that status and power are 'wholly determined by economic factors, we can do no better than to quote :

. . . According to the materialist conception of history the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of

real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase.<sup>6</sup>

But this is not enough. Our author continues :

The pluralist position is on the whole more flexible. . . . The pluralist would argue that two industrial societies which are very similar in their economic organisation might differ somewhat in their distribution of power.

We do not question the 'flexibility' of pluralism here; enough has been said about that in our introductory paragraphs. But we do question the use of the term 'industrial society', which in pluralist parlance *a la* Dahrendorf is the term designating 'post-capitalist' society. Our mystification is complete, when we read further :

It might be argued that one or another aspect of inequality is likely to acquire special prominence in a particular society at a given phase of its historical development. There is little doubt that market forces, the rule of property and the division into capitalists and workers were the most conspicuous features of West European societies in the second half of the last century. It is no accident that Marxian theory, which assigned so much significance to the economic factor, was a product of this society.

The solution is at hand. Since market forces, rule of property, and the division into capitalists and workers are such obsolete features today, in the author's understanding, it may well be deemed that industrial society under the neutral rule of technology holds sway in post-capitalist society. Marxist theory is accordingly a nineteenth century anachronism that has strayed into the industrial utopia of the twentieth century ! As Raymond Aron<sup>7</sup> has written, very much in the same vein :

a way of avoiding at the outset the opposition between socialism and capitalism and of considering them as two species of the same genus : industrial society.

The suggestion is explicit. A clash between the forces of production and the institutions of the property system is theoretically ruled out since they together form the non-anatagonistic unity of industrial society.

A point of order is necessary here. The term 'industrial society' can be used as a descriptive term wherein its use need not be ideological. But in our examination of the monograph at hand we increasingly discover the receding boundary between pluralism and ideology. It becomes clearer when our author is seen to go on to say :

Two contrasts are of special importance in contemporary sociological analysis. The first is between patterns of inequality in pre-industrial and industrial societies and the second is between types of stratification in the two variants of industrial society, the capitalist and the socialist.

Perhaps no further comment is necessary here.

## IV

It is useful to recollect within the course of this exposition that the paper we are reviewing purports to examine inequality and social change: such periodic recollection is made necessary by the nature of the presentation itself which is as rambling and desultory an exposition as would warm the heart of any pluralist worth his name.

In one of the several references to the subject we are told that several changes have taken place in patterns of social inequality over the last two hundred years:

These changes have been closely associated with the process of industrialisation and are therefore most clearly in evidence in the industrial societies of today. It is important to understand them if only for the light they may throw on the possibilities which are open to these countries which have embarked on the process of industrialisation.

The 'process of industrialisation' is obviously the happy euphemism which refers to the two hundred years of expansion of the imperialistic colonial system based for the most part on the political subjugation, economic exploitation and ideological suppression of the vast areas of Asia, Africa and Latin America. In a radically different sense, therefore, we fully endorse the statement that changes in the pattern of social inequality have taken place. The monopolist has replaced the small capitalist, the multi-national corporations have replaced the domestic monopolist, and neo-colonialism has replaced classical colonialism. From 1876 to 1914 the process of 'industrialisation' had placed under direct economic and political bondage 67 per cent of the world's territory and 60 per cent of the world's population. Five great 'industrial' empires Britain, France, Germany, Japan and the USA had enslaved a territory of 22.3 million square miles with a population of 236 million.<sup>8</sup> Naturally, one would imagine, 'patterns of social inequality' would change, if such was the price of 'industrialisation'!

But let us go on to the exciting thesis propounded by the author in clarifying his own conceptual approach to the problem of social inequality. In many ways it is classic in its utter confusion of terms, dislocation of history, and distortion of socio-economic fact. Human societies, we are told are broadly of two kinds:

which I shall call harmonic and disharmonic. I describe a harmonic social system as one in which there is consistency between the existential order and the normative order and a disharmonic system as one in which the two are in conflict. In a harmonic system inequalities not only exist in fact but are also considered legitimate. In a disharmonic system inequalities are no longer invested with legitimacy although they continue to exist in fact.

It is hard to suppress annoyance at the nature of intellectual bankruptcy which promotes such an obviously endeavoured caricature of

reality in mystifying, if attractive, terms. If we toy with the passage above in a slightly serious vein, the conceptual curtains roll back and the theoretical hieroglyphics fall into place. Let us then complete the dissection slowly.

First, let us examine the so-called harmonic system where the existential and normative orders are said to fuse so completely, for example, the caste system of traditional India. If we examine the historical appearance of caste it would correspond roughly to the feudal mode of production. And if we examine feudal society, at least at the stage of its ascendancy rather than decline, we find that it corresponds to the concept of a harmonic system, in the author's words, where the practice of inequality is rendered legitimate by the social codes of the time.<sup>9</sup>

Secondly, if we examine the disharmonic system with any degree of alertness, particularly in the example of the author who chooses the colour-system in the United States we find that it is precisely capitalism that encourages, during the period of the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie, during the phase of competitive capitalism, talk of equality, liberty and fraternity while constituting a hierarchical, oppressive system. The disharmonic system is an obvious reference therefore to capitalist society, and the capitalist mode of production.

Stripped of the verbiage, the empirical referents of harmonic and disharmonic systems come clear. But there is yet more ground to traverse. We are further told that in a harmonic system, conflicts are 'likely to be limited and subdued' whereas in a disharmonic system, they are likely to be 'open and endemic'. The explanation is so roundabout that it resists comprehension and, if anything, invites disaster. The premise of inequality is contained in both the harmonic and disharmonic systems in the existential order: the differentiating factor is obviously consciousness. We thus have the remarkable feat of distinguishing social systems by means of consciousness instead of the means of production; more remarkable when we realise that the signifying factor is false consciousness. Instead of investigating the nature of 'existential' inequality in the two 'systems', which would have led the author to the familiar Marxian concept of mode of production, a deliberate turn to obfuscation is taken by seeking the root of the problem in the superstructural and resultant elements of consciousness. Human societies are distinguished by consciousness only from animals—not from each other. Societies are distinguished from each other through production: what is produced, how it is produced and how the product is exchanged. To quote a pertinent writer:

From this point of view the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in man's better insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the mode of production and exchange. They are to be sought not in the philosophy, but in the economics of each particular epoch.<sup>10</sup>

Or, if one were to stretch the argument further, we are being pro-

ferred a contradiction between existence and consciousness as the dynamo of social change. This would be a novel formulation if it were not so clumsy. Let us once again reorganise the golden fleece. When there appears a contradiction between existence and consciousness, to continue the idiom of the author, we would suggest that he questions why. For a very simple reason: because a contradiction in consciousness (not so much a contradiction between existence and consciousness) cannot occur without a contradiction in existence itself. In other words in the historical phase of the decline of a ruling class and the parallel ascendancy of another, corresponding to structural tensions between the social force of productive activity and the social relations of production there is bound to be a rupture in the way men perceive their social institutions. For subjective dissatisfaction to be a social force of magnitude the objective contradictions must exist. But this is a complex, historical process needing much more enumeration than is necessary here. It serves our purpose if the point is made: any logic that bypasses history must either be circumspect or cockeyed, or both.

## V

In a recent newspaper article<sup>11</sup> we find the author setting out and solving the intellectual problem of pluralism in the typical manner, substituting the form for the essence, the structure for the function and the general for the particular:

Is sociology a conservative discipline? I find it impossible to answer this question in the abstract for, like any other intellectual discipline, it may perform a conservative function in one society and a radical function in another.

Hence the neutrality of all social institutions! The unraised question looms like a phantom over us all. Can the same content perform different functions simultaneously? Or is a structural overhaul of ideology, apologetics and mystification necessary before sociology can stand on its feet again? Or to put it another way isn't it possible to have two sociologies operating in the same social context; one that is conservative and another that is radical? The answer overwhelmingly would be in the affirmative. The problem then becomes one of identification for the social scientist of his location in the two sociologies. As C Wright Mills, one of the few courageous scholars of Western sociology wrote as early as 1959:<sup>12</sup>

If human history is to play a larger and more explicit role in the making of history, social scientists must surely be among its major carriers. For in their work they represent the uses of reason in the understanding of human affairs; that is what they are about. If they wish to work and thus to act in a consciously chosen way, they must first locate themselves within the intellectual life and the socio-historical structure of their times. Within the social domains of intelligence, they must locate themselves: and they must relate these domains, in

turn, to the structure of historical society.

It is precisely this problem of location that is attempted to be shrugged off, for the article concludes that it is the sociologist rather than sociology who must be vigilant; social responsibility is implied to devolve on personal integrity, which is the only arbiter of social truth:

I think the real question is not whether sociology is a conservative or radical discipline, but how sociologists face up to the challenge when they find their society in crisis.

Only a single query is needed to explode the pretentiousness of this statement: what challenge is being alluded to here, the challenge of reaction or revolution? Academic freedom can be questioned by forces of progress as well as forces of reaction. Let there be no talk in the abstract, therefore, of the challenge of social crises, without specifying the nature of the anticipated crisis. If there is a genuine crisis it is in sociology itself and an ostrich-like headstand only further aggravates it. Instead of being a humanistic social science aiming to unravel the veils of mystification from repressive social institutions, sociology has, in the words of Martin Nicolaus,<sup>13</sup>

... worked to create and increase the inequitable distribution of knowledge; it has worked to make the power structure relatively more powerful and knowledgeable, and thereby to make the subject population relatively more impotent and ignorant.

And all of us sociologists, including the distinguished author of the article in question, are partners in this unconscious intellectual conspiracy. And let us have the fewest possible illusions about the 'tolerant' society we are said to live in. Tolerance is the gift of the rulers to the ruled, of the master to the slave, of the exploiter to the exploited: tolerance is therefore no tribute to the society that permits; on the contrary it is an insult to those who are tolerated, who are being only 'allowed' the freedom that is the inalienable right of man, anyway. Let us turn away then, from the 'two faces of sociology', to the *true face* of sociology and learn to distinguish ourselves from those fellow sociologists about whom Martin Nicolaus<sup>14</sup> has said:

... the eyes of sociologists, with few but honourable (or honourable but few) exceptions have been turned downward, and their palms upward. Eyes down to study the activities of the lower classes, of the subject population—those activities which created problems for the smooth exercise of governmental hegemony . . . .

<sup>1</sup> Andre Beteille, *Inequality and Social Change*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1972.

<sup>2</sup> Gaetano Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, New York, 1939.

<sup>3</sup> Vilfredo Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, New York, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> Raymond Aron, "Social Class, Political Class, Ruling Class" from Bendix and Lipset (ed), *Class, Status and Power*, The Free Press, New York, 1953.

<sup>5</sup> Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, The Free Press, 1964.

<sup>6</sup> Frederick Engels, "Letter to J Bloch, September 21-22, 1890", Marx and Engels

*Selected Correspondence*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1953.

<sup>7</sup> Raymond Aron, *Eighteen Lectures on Industrial Society*, London, 1967.

<sup>8</sup> Data quoted from K Brutents, *A Historical View of Neo-colonialism*, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1972.

<sup>9</sup> So, for that matter, would a slave society; the point is made solely to demonstrate the a-temporal and a-historical nature of the entire characterisation.

<sup>10</sup> Frederick Engels, "Socialism : Utopian and Scientific", Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol 2, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1958.

<sup>11</sup> Andre Beteille, "Two Faces of Sociology : Conservative and Radical", *The Times of India*, New Delhi, March 8, 1973.

<sup>12</sup> C Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1959.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Introduction by David Horowitz (ed), of *Radical Sociology : An Introduction*, Canfield Press, 1971.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

KISHAN SINGH

*Warris Shah*  
*Punjabi Poet of Love and Liberation*

IN this short paper it is not possible to deal with Warris Shah comprehensively; therefore no attempt is being made here in that direction. We only intend to draw the readers' attention to the few points that are invariably lost sight of by most critics.

Warris Shah reflects the Sikh revolution of his times. It is not possible to understand him, unless we understand the class nature of the guerrilla warfare which the peasant-plebeians of the Punjab were waging against the established order.

The roots of this revolutionary armed struggle lie far back in the crises that overtook the Brahmanical Hindu society in the early Middle Ages. This is borne out by the fact that the founders of the Sikh movement themselves hark back to the much earlier period. Sufi Farid and Bhakta Kabir and other Hindu bhaktas of the earlier times form an integral part of the Holy Granth. This means that the Gurus held these people to be expounding the same truth as they themselves were doing. Warris Shah himself is very conscious of his ideological and spiritual lineage. Before he starts the narration of the love story, he makes a reverential reference to God, the Prophet and the Four Friends, and then comes

directly to Farid. He calls him *pir kamal*, the man who has attained the ultimate spiritual perfection attainable by man; the man who incarnates in himself the truth of God. It is obvious that according to Warris Shah, Farid is the real Sufi, and further, real Islam is what Farid teaches. The Sufism of Warris Shah is exactly the same as that of his *pir kamal*—Farid. This truth of Farid is not only for personal salvation, but is also the panacea for all human ills in society. According to Warris Shah, the freedom of the Punjab from all its ills, its happiness and salvation, lies in the acceptance and practice of the truth propounded by Farid. The lovers that Warris Shah creates have his full approbation. He creates his positive characters in the exact image of Darvesh, the positive character propounded by Farid. He is very explicit about it. The lovers created by him are real lovers only because, like Farid himself, they have overcome in themselves the deadly sins like selfishness, greed, lust and the like *nafas* and *hirs*—the same that *Gurbani* in its own idiom also declares as such. Farid is the connecting link between *Gurbani* on one side and Warris Shah on the other. In other words, in spite of all the differences in tradition, the idiom and the form in which the positive characters have been portrayed, the human and social essence of Farid's Darvesh, *Gurbani's* Gurmukh and Warris Shah's Aashiks, are the same. In *Gurbani's* idiom Heer and Ranjha are Gurmukhs or Aashak is the secular form of Gurmukh. This brings us to the conclusion that Farid, and the Gurus, the bhaktas included in the *Adi Granth* and Warris Shah depict the social reality from the same standpoint and have the same value pattern. The only thing left to be seen is what exactly this standpoint is and what the implications of the value pattern are with reference to the nature of society and man. What is the nature of man for whom these poets draw the reader's sympathy and approbation?

Apart from the history of men, neither morality nor religion nor consciousness has an independent history and development of its own. In order to understand this consciousness, we have to look to the real existence of men. Marx and Engels wrote thus in *The German Ideology*:

Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men altering their material production and their material intercourse, alter—along with this—their real existence and their thinking and the products of their thinking.<sup>1</sup>

As long as a class society functions normally and is more or less stable, its ruling ideas are the ideas of its ruling class. The ruling classes dominate not only in material production but also in cultural and intellectual production. The consciousness of a society about itself and about the world in general is the consciousness of its ruling class. Marx and Engels have made this point very clear in *The German Ideology*:

Does it require deep intuition to comprehend that man's ideas, views and conceptions, in a word, man's consciousness, changes with every

change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations, and in his social life? What else does the history of ideas prove, than that intellectual production changes its character in proportion as material production is changed? The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class. When people speak of ideas that revolutionise society, they do but express the fact that within the old society the elements of the new one have been created, and that the dissolution of the old ideas keeps even pace with the dissolution of the old conditions of existence.<sup>2</sup>

The existence of revolutionary ideas in a society presupposes the existence of a revolutionary class against the established order. When a class rises to challenge the established order in a revolutionary way, it looks at life from the standpoint of its own interests and considers them to be moral. It throws up its own ideology and its own world view. Its outlook and morality challenge the established outlook and morality and declare them immoral. Its ideology justifies its own rise. Engels writes,

We maintain that all moral theories have been hitherto the product, in the last analysis, of the economic stage which society had reached at that particular epoch. And as society has hitherto moved in class antagonisms, morality was always a class morality; it has either justified the domination and the interests of the ruling class, or, ever since the oppressed class has become powerful enough, it has represented its indignation against the domination and the future interests of the oppressed.<sup>3</sup>

When Brahmanical system of the Hindu society fell into a deep crisis in the early Middle Ages, it began to lose the allegiance of its own people at all levels of existence. Being in the process of dissolution and having lost the allegiance of its own people, it was too weak to resist the foreign onslaught. The Muslim feudal rulers coming from outside defeated the local feudal rulers of the Brahmanical Hindu society and established their own sway in most parts of northern India. The ideologue and spokesman of the newly established Muslim feudal rule in India was the *kāzi*. He was not only an influential dignitary of official Islam, but also a powerful functionary of the Muslim feudal state then established in India. In those days the dogmas of the established religion were at the same time political axioms, and the quotations from the scriptures had the validity of law in every court. When Islam had conquered Iran and formed an empire, its Quranic content, its revolutionary content, was quietly buried. Islam henceforth had become the official religion. So the *kāzi* was the spokesman of the established Muslim state and justified its interests and actions, and declared them moral and acceptable in the eyes of God. The establishment of the Muslim feudal rule in place of the Hindu feudal rule, was not a smooth change-over from one feudal state to another, or from one dynastic rule to another. It was not a question of the change of one government for another. Since the whole social order was in the process of dissolution,

there was great ferment in the whole of the society. The labouring classes began to question the whole established order. Since, at that time, the predominant mode of consciousness in society was religious, the questioning—and the revolt of the labouring classes—expressed itself first in the form of the rise of heretical movements against the established one. This happened in the Hindu as well as in the Muslim fold. The clashing class interests expressed themselves in the idiom of God, and the class struggle took the shape of confrontation between two religions or two rival interpretations of the same religion.

Whether it was the Brahmanical Hindu society or the feudal Muslim one, it was a class society and so in the established order man was ruled by money and dominated by property. His being dominated by *maya*<sup>4</sup> meant that the goal of man's life had become the acquisition of property. This had perverted his nature. Avarice had become his dominant motive.

In the Hindu fold bhaktas like Kabir, and later in the same tradition the Sikh Gurus took up the cause of the plebeian and threw up a religion expressing his freedom. The plebeian being the rock bottom of class society, his freedom meant the freedom of all. Since the new religion represented the freedom of man, it gave a scientific critique of the contemporary society. It declared that man was unhappy and that society had become a vale of tears. Man was unhappy because he was a slave. He was in the bondage of *maya*—money, property, goods. As he was in the grip of *maya* he had ceased to be human. He had become a devil, another name of evil. He had become completely egoistic. He had fallen a victim to the lure of money, greed, lust, anger and pride—the five deadly sins. All the social relations that he entered into, all the institutions that he built, all that he felt, thought or did was nothing but the result of egoism and it led to the perpetuation of the hold of *maya* over man. The new religion declared that the salvation of man lay in his freedom—freedom from the domination of money and his consequent absolution from egoism, greed, lust and the like. Freedom of man alone could result in the brotherhood of man and thus alone could man become man again, and thus would love pervade his life. This, when put into practice by the labouring classes, was the death knell to the established order of society. The idea that man was dominated by *maya* was not new in the Hindu tradition. But the revolutionary significance of the discovery of this truth was long since lost. Brahmanism was the product of the domination of Lakshmi over man and it helped the perpetuation of that domination. The significance of this truth could only be grasped by the revolutionary plebeians. They alone could understand that freedom always expresses itself in love and that it is a razor's edge to everything that stands in the way of love.

What a bhakta like Kabir was in the Hindu fold, a Sufi like Farid was in the Islamic fold. It is now commonly recognised that when the Brahmanical system of Hindu society was in doldrums, Islam spread its

roots deep in the population of this country. Millions of local people entered the Islamic fold. It is now freely conceded that in the earlier period of the Muslim rule, large-scale conversions were conversions to the Sufi Islam. It was the Sufis like Farid whose influence was responsible for these large-scale conversions. The *kazis*—the official Islam—hardly had any hand in them. It is also conceded that the converts were by and large the labouring classes and the dregs of the Brahmanical society. It was the artisans and labourers in the towns, and the tillers, the *kamins*, and the day labourers from the rural scene. The upper class and the business class Hindu, by and large, stayed away from Islam. These facts are freely conceded. But their real significance is hardly ever grasped. It is not realised that in becoming converts to Farid's Sufi Islam, these peasants and plebeians were extending their hands towards their own freedom. Farid's Islam was Islam in its revolutionary purity. It was antithetical to everything that the official Islam of the times did and stood for in society. All religions ultimately come to the practical conduct of man in society, in other words, the value pattern. The value pattern given by the new heretical religion of the bhakta, the Sufi and the Sikh Gurus, cuts across everything that the established religions stood for, and all in the name of God.

Its concept of what was right and what was wrong and in the mode of distribution of the means of life, what was lawful (*halal*) and what was sinful (*haram*) was in direct contradiction to the practice in society. Farid, Kabir and other Hindu bhaktas are an integral part of the *Adi Granth*, because like the Sikh Gurus, they all stand for revolution against the domination of *maya* (money, property) over man. In other words, they all stand for the freedom of man. It is this tradition of Islam that Warris Shah inherits, and it is Farid's Sufism to which he owes his allegiance.

In order to understand Warris Shah and other religious poets expounding this heretical religion, we have to clearly understand the difference between a slave and a free man. When *maya* dominates man, the goal of man's life in society becomes the acquisition of wealth. When lure of money and property becomes his motive force, he is bound to become selfish and greedy. He tries to use each man who comes his way to his own advantage. He regards other men as competitors, and hence hostile to himself in the pursuit of wealth. Since the goal is amassing private wealth, the nature of his work becomes egoistic.

I have produced for myself and not for you, as you have produced for yourself and not for me. The result of my production has, in and of itself, just as little direct relation to you as the result of your production has to me, i. e., our production is (not) production of people, for people, as people, i. e., not social production. As human beings thus, none of us has a relationship of gratification to the product of the other. Our mutual production has no existence for us as people. Our exchange can therefore also not be the mediating movement wherein

it is acknowledged that my product is for you, at the same time as it is a materialisation of your being, your needs. For not the human essence is the bond of our production for each other.<sup>5</sup>

Man ceases to be human. He becomes wolfish. The point to be grasped is that it is the domination of man by money which makes him selfish and greedy. In other words, a man who is selfish and greedy and the like is a slave. On the one hand, selfishness and greed are the outcome of the slavery of man and on the other hand, the more one is guided by selfishness and greed the stronger become the chains of his slavery. When man has broken the bondage of money he ceases to be egoistic. His work becomes social.

With the work becoming social, man and his society become truly human. Other men appear before man as complements of his being, as collaborators in common in human purpose as "himself once more". Each man recognises himself as a universal, social being. When man gets free from the domination of money and becomes social, there is no soil left in his mind for selfishness and greed. Instead love pervades every aspect of his life. So a man is free only when he is motivated by love for all. Love alone is the expression of freedom.

When man becomes a slave, along with the other aspects of his nature, his sexual passion also gets perverted and degraded. It becomes worse than animal lust. Women to him then become mere chattel—objects for the satisfaction of his lust. *Gurbani* makes a very clear distinction between the sexual passion of a slave and the genuine sexual love of a free man. It calls the former carnal lust, *kaam*, and declares it a deadly sin. To the latter alone it gives the name 'love'. The carnal lust of the slave is declared a deadly sin not only because it is the expression of the slavery of man, not only because the more man indulges in it the worse a slave he becomes, but also because it is a strong bulwark for the system of *maya* where man is bound to remain a slave. Unless man's nature is purified and man is absolved of this carnal passion, he cannot be free himself and cannot be a fighter for human freedom and salvation. Sexual love in the human sense of the word is the attribute of a free man only. In the state of freedom alone, it mediates between man and woman for their mutual self-fulfilment. In the language of Warris Shah this alone is *ishk* (love). To become an *aashik* (lover) according to Warris Shah is to attain the status of *pir*—the delivered man.<sup>6</sup>

The story that Warris Shah takes up is known to every one in the Punjab. A handsome boy of a landowner's family, named Dhedo Ranjha comes face to face with an outstandingly beautiful girl of an aristocratic family named Heer. They fall in love with each other. Heer manages to get Ranjha appointed a cowherd to look after her father's buffaloes. This position Ranjha very willingly accepts. The lovers keep on meeting on the riverside when the buffaloes go for grazing. A time comes when Heer requests her parents to give her in marriage to Ranjha. Under the influence of the values of the society, the marriage is refused on the

ground that an aristocrat's daughter cannot be married to a cowherd—a menial *gola*. Heer is married to Saida. From her father-in-law's house Heer runs away with Ranjha with the help of her sister-in-law Sahti. The runaway lovers are caught, and in an attempt to get legally married, Heer is poisoned by her parents; and Ranjha dies because for him life is not possible without her.

This story shows a conflict between two modes of existence—an antagonism between two systems of society, a head-on-clash between two civilisations : one which is in existence and the other which is struggling to be born. To be more exact, this story brings out the clash between the social system of *maya* where money rules and man is its slave on the one hand and free society on the other, in which man will be restored to his true position and will become master of the means of existence and thus attain his true humanity. How the story is told and with which side of the conflict the reader is made to sympathise, depends upon the value pattern of the poet. Consciously or otherwise, when he once accepts the standpoint of either of the two systems, the rest follows logically. Suppose he is steeped in the value pattern of the established order, he will naturally make the reader feel that Heer is a fallen woman, and by having illicit relations with the servant of the household, she is bringing the social position and prestige of her father to dust. And finally by running away with him out of the wedlock, she conclusively proves that she is without all moral sense. In that case Sahti would be doubly immoral. She would be faithless to her father and brother and the family honour, and a go-between in favour of an illicit relationship. Kaido in that case would be virtue incarnate and the custodian of the moral values of the established society, winning the greatest reverence of the reader. The story, as it is now, takes completely the opposite stance, vindicating the lovers, in other words upholding the values of the freedom of man.

The story is not the creation of Warris Shah and for that matter not the creation of any poet. The basic human facts were real happenings but the whole stance towards those facts was the creation of the popular imagination. In the Punjab, the peasant-plebeians of that epoch were questioning the established order from the plebeian point of view, that is, from the point of view of man's freedom from the fetters of *maya*. The spearhead of this plebeian consciousness was so strong that it had expressed itself in the form of a religion rival to the established one. It was emerging in the form of a strong movement which was fast institutionalising itself. In the times of Warris Shah, the peasant plebeians were in armed revolt against the state. People's imagination not only determined the general stance but shaped the story in its entirety, crystallising the conflicting parties with their class values, and chiselling out the moral contours of each character and defining his exact position. The story as is shaped, not only upheld the lovers, but also sanctified *ishk* (love), giving it the concrete content of human freedom, thus making the lovers tragic heroes, representatives of the new order. *Ishk* (love) stands four square against

the yardstick of money, property and status created by property. Having overcome its perversion and degradation at the hands of private property the sexual sentiment shines out in its pristine glory and human purity. It has become the bond uniting a free man and a free woman. As it can arise only among the people who have shattered the bonds of *maya*, it becomes a revolutionary sentiment against the established social set up. Kaido becomes the active villain against the union of the lovers. In this role he is so fixed in the popular imagination, that he is a contemporary of every generation and stands as poison to everything that is human.

This story shaped by the popular imagination almost became a national legend of the Punjab in that epoch. It became an ideological weapon in the hands of people to put across their world view, their pattern of values, their view of man-woman relationship; in short, it became a vehicle for the expression of their revolution. As if compelled by a power beyond him, for many generations, poet after poet kept on expressing his experience of the social reality through this story. It shows the strength of the revolutionary movement of the times that there is not a single poet who goes against the popular imagination to excite sympathy of the reader towards the parents of Heer or to evoke an iota of respect for marriage of Heer with Saida. In the rendering of every poet, this marriage evokes nothing but contempt. This is indicative of the attitude of the revolting peasant-plebeians towards the institutions held sacred by the existing set-up. Unresponsive and blind to the intentions of all the poets who have rendered this story, only Karam Singh, a historian, has the temerity to categorise Heer and Ranjha as fallen and depraved young people. In that period in the Punjab, not only this story but other *ishk* (love) stories, and not all of them of native origin, caught the imagination of the people. Parallel with their heretical religion, these stories became the vehicles or medium for the expression of their revolutionary culture and also the popular means for their cultural training. The strength of the revolutionary movement of the times is further confirmed by the fact that the rendering of the *ishk* stories gave birth to a new art form—the *kissa* (epic) in the Punjabi literature. It is noteworthy that it was the first attempt on the part of the people of the Punjab to give expression to their revolutionary experience of life in secular form, in spite of the fact that the mode of consciousness of the society then was predominantly religious.

Warris Shah was an enlightened man. By birth he belonged to the ruling classes. He was a 'Saiyad'. His ideological conversion to the plebeian cause was complete. He was a true Sufi in the tradition of Farid. His imagination imbibed Heer's *ishk* completely. He knew absolutely clearly the human content of the *aashik* (lover), and for that matter that of the Sufi. Since he knew this he was well aware of the degraded, perverted and deadly nature of his antagonist. Thus he depicted the peasant-plebeian revolution of his times in a manner that has made him immortal; and the language, the vigour, the sweep and the

popular idiom of the work is unsurpassed in Punjabi literature.

Warris Shah starts the story from a scene in Takhat Hazara. The need of the plot is simple. Ranjha must leave his village and take the road to Jhang Syal to meet his destiny. The departure of Ranjha from his village has a bearing upon the crux of the economic, domestic, social and cultural life of the village in such a manner that the essence of the social system comes out alive before our eyes. In this system property dominates man completely and in obedience to its demands man is perverted and degraded. Ranjha's father dies. The main property in the village is land. After the death of the father the land has to be divided among the brothers. Overnight the blood brothers become thirsty of one another's blood. Each one wants to be a lone wolf. In this social system the reason for this wolfishness is cogent and obvious. Land is the stay of life. Whosoever gets the best land gets concrete advantage, not only for his own lifetime, but for generations to come. Whosoever shows a little generosity, brotherliness or humanity, suffers a deep disadvantage, the results of which will persist from generation to generation. Such a man may earn a temporary gratitude from his brothers but that will be at the cost of permanent curses from his descendants. In the situation it is obvious that nobody can afford to be generous and human, and nobody remains human particularly when his wife is close by to whisper venom into his ears against his brothers. There is every temptation to use cunning, deceit and bribery to get the best and the maximum out of the division. It is a sort of free for all. Right in front of our eyes we see that in obedience to the demands of property, brotherliness evaporates, humanity is discarded and selfishness and greed take full possession of man. Obviously this is the law of this social life. Ranjha's brothers use every weapon to their best advantage. The land that falls to his share is barren, uncultivated and uncultivable. Disgusted, he decides to leave the village of his birth. Having secured the land, the brothers are quick to realize the value of an extra arm bearer in every armed confrontation in the village. Besides, his departure would earn them a bad name. They try to prevail upon him not to go. When he has been robbed of his due share, the sisters-in-law have their own reason to make him stay. Being the youngest and the most handsome, he was to them a plaything and an object of romance, without incurring too much odium in the village. They too want him to stay, though when it suits them they taunt him saying that he is the cause of their disrepute. Incidentally, the scene shows the stuff of which the *kazi* and the headman of the village, who are supposed to be doling out justice, are made of. Bribe is a potent weapon and money makes the mare go.

On his way to Jhang, Ranjha spends a night in a mosque. This gives an opportunity to Warris Shah to highlight the degradation and corruption of the official religious institution and its incumbent. On the riverside he wins over Luddon and his wives with his beauty and song, and thus lies down in the pleasure-boat of Heer to rest a while. In the

story Heer comes before us in two opposed roles. First as a member of the ruling class and then as a victim of the same ruling class. Intoxicated by her youth and beauty and maddened by the rule of her father, she cares for nobody. She is the undisputed leader of her group. She brooks no opposition. Woe betide her serving man who fails to carry out her whims. 'Luddon' is beaten mercilessly because he permitted a stranger to lie in her pleasure-boat and she comes with the same intention towards Ranjha. This typifies the relationship of the ruling class with the labouring people. Getting up, Ranjha looks at Heer and greets her with love-laden words "O Friend". Heer smiles and becomes kind. They fall in love with each other at the very first sight. The *ishk* (love) that has made them one has also completely transformed them as human beings. It has purified their hearts of all the dirt that the established order and their class position in it had put into them. The moment *ishk* has pervaded their heart, no place has been left there for selfishness, greed, lust and the like, and for that matter, for any values of that social set-up. In the Marxian language both of them have been "declassed". They have gone over to the revolutionary standpoint against the society of their birth. Heer gets Ranjha appointed as the cowherd for her father's cattle. This was a profession of the lowest menial in that society. Ranjha accepts the position willingly. He neither goes back from it nor ever regrets the decision. He has become a plebeian in thought and deed. The transformed Heer has taken this decision and it never crosses her mind that for Ranjha to work as a menial is derogatory either to herself or to him. A ruling class man can become a highway robber, a smuggler or a debauch of the worst order, and he does not lose his caste. He is still acceptable to his class. But let him once take up a menial profession and work in it, he can never claim the kinship of his class again. He is doomed for ever. Like every ruling class, the aristocrats of Jhang take the same view. They regard Ranjha as a serving man (*gola*) and they would not give their daughter in marriage to him. This, to them, is degrading.

The real point in the battle of love, the crucial thing in the creation of Warris Shah, is the transformation in the lovers brought about by their love. Ranjha, the son of a headman, Mauju, has whole-heartedly accepted the position of a cowherd. From now on, the status-consciousness has vanished from his mind, leaving no trace behind. Heer has changed beyond recognition. Heer who at one time was intoxicated by the rule and status of her father has come to the standpoint of a revolting plebeian. The value pattern of the system of society, in which she was born, has been washed off from her mind. She knows that, according to the code of honour of that system, her enjoying the embraces and kisses with Ranjha before marriage is scandalous. To the aristocracy her love relationship with a servant is downright degrading. It is humiliating to the extent that it would be impossible for the father and the brothers to hold their heads high in public after this shame. It was such a dis-

honour that its ill effects would go down for generations. By this act of hers the spotless record of the family honour, as prevalent in that system, stands besmirched. But to Heer all this code of honour and its consequences are of no significance. She holds the whole code of such honour in utter contempt. She is not stealing a few kisses with somebody till the marriage takes place with the appointed man. Her commitment to her love with Ranjha is total. She is steeled in the value of *ishk* and regards it as the highest morality and the only morality. It is with the inner conviction that her love for Ranjha is sacred and the only love acceptable to God that she boldly approaches her father for her marriage with her beloved.

Heer's transformed self stands chiselled out in her confrontation with the *kazi* at the time of her forced marriage with Saida. The moral contours of her personality shine forth very clearly in her ideological clash with him. The ideological battle between the *kazi* and Heer is a clash between two mutually contradictory patterns of values. The *kazi* stands for the feudal set-up of the times and Heer epitomises the revolutionary plebeian. Warris Shah explicitly claims that his poetry is the expression of the essence of Koran.<sup>7</sup> It brings out its essential meaning. It means that Heer embodies the Sufi stand. In the religious terminology it is a clash between the official Islam, *kazi-ism* and Sufism.

The point at issue is, whether Saida or Ranjha is the lawful husband of Heer. Since it is a battle between two mutually contradictory concepts of what is right and moral, both sides are absolutely clear about the verdict. There is no question of any kind of compromise between the two parties. If property and the status given by it are the yardsticks, the obvious choice is Saida. It is according to the current coin that the parents of Heer and the headmen have made that choice. In that society it was unthinkable for the girl to have any say in the matter.<sup>8</sup> The *kazi* would put his seal on the choice made by the parents. The *kazi* makes appeals to the property and status, which he thinks may still prevail on Heer. He advises her not to jump into the mud. By mud he means union with Ranjha, the cowherd. He appeals to her not to unite silks with coarse cloth, not to bind the costly shawls with the rough blanket. The symbols used and the advice given leave no doubt about the yardstick of the *kazi*. The apparently sane path shown by the *kazi* is the same which the propertied classes always show to their erring children in such situations, and it is well expressed in the Punjabi saying that "the brick of the top storey must not be brought down for the construction of the dirty ditch." To attain his objective, the *kazi* uses every weapon that the armoury of his religion provides him with. Of course Heer and her Sufism have a counter weapon for every one used by him. *Kazi* uses the authority of God and says that it is ordained by God that the daughters must obey their parents. He brings in the Code and demands submission to it. He threatens that those who disobey the Code shall burn in hell-fire. Of course he interprets the Code himself. He appeals to her common-

sense. He wants her to realise that she has no power to resist the decision taken by the parents and himself. The implication is that she should submit to the inevitable with good grace. When nothing cuts ice with Heer, he threatens that he can order her to be burnt alive for all the world to see. When nothing avails, against all the dictates of the Holy Koran he asks the headman to cork her mouth and finish the job before she does further mischief. According to the Koran the girl must give her willing consent to the proposed marriage before the marriage rites are performed. It is clear that although the *kazi* talks of the God of Koran, his real gods are property and the status given by property. For the needs of these gods he is prepared to violate the most explicit commands of the Koran. This is typical of all ruling classes. When they are confronted with a crisis or revolutionary situation, they can quickly abrogate all their rules. They do not mind going counter even to the norms in their own class interest. If need be, they will use brute force and lawlessness to remain in power.

After her meeting with Ranjha the striking thing about Heer is her integrity, her absolute honesty and her crystal-clear moral vision. In her *ishk* with Ranjha she found the ultimate truth of life and there is no swerving away from it. This love has left no uncertainty, no hesitation in her mind. Her vision is clear and her choice is irrevocable. The stakes are high. But she understands them. She is prepared to pay the ultimate price. She has understood in her bones that only that life is worthwhile which is lived with integrity and truth. For her the ultimate truth, God's own truth, is her love with Ranjha. She tells the *kazi* that the heart of the lover is the house of God and she makes an appeal to him not to destroy it. There is nothing more lawful than *ishk*. It is the ultimate truth and thus a law unto itself.

Her love is its own sanctity. It need no sanction from outside. On the basis of it she claims that she is already married to Ranjha. She claims that she was married on the sacred day when Prophet Mohammed had appointed Ali as his successor on the field of Gadir. She further affirms that her marriage was solemnised by the spirit of the Prophet himself under God's own command. The Kutab himself was the witness and this was in the presence of the four angels. On the basis of solemnity and sanctity of this marriage, she asks the *kazi*, "How can you break the previous sanctified marriage to institute another? Where does God ordain it?"<sup>9</sup> When she has seen that all her pleading has gone in vain and that the *kazi* will use his brute force to yoke her with Saida, she evokes curses on him in the name of God, the Prophet and the Koran. She knows that the *kazi* can perform the marriage rites but she knows and says to Ranjha that she will not live with Saida and nothing can force her to do so. With the sprouting of love in her heart she has travelled miles away from the position where she could be a plaything in the hands of her parents through their lure of status. Now she cannot be a willing victim of anyone's lust and greed. Her *ishk* has made her completely autono-

mous and self-determined. She tells the *kazi* that she will obey no one else but herself. She herself is her *ishk*. Her *ishk* alone governs her. This is the human moral transformation that has taken place in her. This transformation has given her personality and character. This has made her a free woman. She has attained her personality and character just because of her *ishk*. Only when her sexual passion has ceased to be lust, only when her heart has been absolved of selfishness, greed and the like, only when this sexual passion has been humanised and when it has become a human passion has she acquired her will and become free. This will is human because its content is love. It is the expression of love. So her being human and being free is one and the same thing or, in other words, the sexual passion between a free woman and a free man alone is *ishk*. The rest is all lust. So long as property dominates men and women their sexual passion is also under its domination and it is not free. Sexual passion dominated by property is lust. Lust is the bosom friend of selfishness, greed, falsehood and sins of all sorts. Only when the sexual passion is free from the domination of property can it be real human love. The *ishk* in Heer's breast has torn asunder the bonds of property from all around her. In that society caste was class determined on the basis of birth. The institution was the creation of the rule of *maya* over man in the specific conditions of the Indian society. Higher castes meant an unearned status of the individual born in them. Just as Heer has no lure of domain left, similarly the high caste has lost all meaning for her. When she is finally being taken away by the *kheras* as a thief takes away the stolen goods, she advises Ranjha to do away with caste and become a *yogi* (a wandering sage) and meet her, for she knows that she herself will not be able to come back to him. This absolution of Heer from the sense of possession of domains, the caste, the status and the like is real transformation in her as a human being. With *ishk* an entirely new kind of Heer has emerged. In order to understand Warris Shah, this human moral transformation of Heer and its significance has to be understood.

The significance of this human moral transformation is far-reaching. To be more exact, this transformation has a revolutionary significance. Warris Shah and his lovers are quite aware of its full content and its implications. When Heer has been forcibly yoked with Saida, she tells Ranjha that all is over between them for the time being. Ranjha in a way taunts her by saying that one should not disturb the sleeping cobras if one does not know how to manage even a honey bee. Ranjha is well aware that the transformation brought about by love in a human being is for the established order "a serpent's egg, which, hatched would, as his kind, grow mischievous". The only course for the established social system is to "kill it in the shell". When the sisters-in-law of Ranjha come to know that he has failed to get Heer and that she has been married to Saida, they advise him that all is over as far as his getting Heer is concerned. He should therefore return home. In his answer to

them, Ranjha shows the irrevocable nature of his *ishk*. He tells them that sooner or later, ultimately he has to go to those who know him and his condition, thereby meaning that all is not over in his efforts to get Heer. He will either get her or die in the attempt. He shows his complete understanding of *ishk* and the price that one has to pay for it in that system of society. He declares that only those run away from it who are the sons of the unworthy. Heer affirms the same thing in the theological language. She tells the *kazi* that those who have been warmed with the warmth of *ishk*, need fear no hell-fire.

From the poetic and metaphorical language, if one were to come down to simple prose one would say that only completely humanised sexual passion is *ishk*. The meaning of its being humanised is that it has ceased to be an object of sale. Humanised love can only be exchanged for humanised love, as trust for trust. It alone is the means of mutual self-fulfilment of man and woman. It can only be the passion of a human being who is completely humanised and whose relation with the whole world is a human one. Marx is very explicit about the central significance of love between man and woman as the immediate relationship of a human being to a human being. This love of a human being is a measure of his relationship with entire life. Marx writes,

In the relationship with woman, as the prey and the handmaid of communal lust, is expressed the infinite degradation in which man exists for himself; for the secret of this relationship finds its unequivocal, incontestable, open and revealed expression in the relation of man to woman and the way in which the direct, and natural species relationship is conceived. The immediate, natural and necessary relationship of human being to human being is also the relation of man to woman. In this natural species relationship, man's relation to nature is directly his relation to man, and his relation to man is directly his relation to nature, to his own natural function. Thus, in this relation is sensuously revealed, reduced to an observable fact, the extent to which human nature has become nature for man and to which nature has become human nature for him. From this relationship man's whole level of development can be assessed. It follows from the character of this relationship how far man has become, and understood himself as, a species-being, a human being. The relation of man to woman is the most natural relation of human being to human being. It indicates, therefore, how far man's natural behaviour has become human, and how far his human essence has become a natural essence for him, how far his human nature has become nature for him. It also shows how far man's needs have become human needs, and consequently how far the other person, as a person, has become one of his needs, and to what extent he is in his individual existence at the same time a social being.<sup>10</sup>

In class society where property dominates man, and money rules him, man and woman, both are dehumanised. Like their total persons,

their sexual passion is also dehumanised and has become lust. Every system of *maya* creates this dehumanisation in man. It can keep itself in existence on the basis of his dehumanisation only. Humanisation of man means his freedom, and his freedom is the end of every system of *maya*. There is always a deadly confrontation between any system of *maya* on one side and anything that makes man human on the other. *Ishk* is something which no system of *maya* can brook.

When property dominates man, like everything else, work is also dehumanised. It becomes slave labour. In the system of *maya* woman is the lowest kind of slave. In the case of male only his labour power is on sale or he is on sale for his labour power only. But in the case of woman, along with this, her sex also is on sale. She is exploited for her sex also. Freedom of women means freedom of all, which means a free society—which means brotherhood of man.

*Ishk* has humanised Heer and Ranjha and made them free. It has made them richer, nobler and greater people than they were before. It has made them heroes. The system cannot assimilate them. Although the system is powerful, it has no power to wean them away from *ishk* which has become their very existence. It cannot cow them down. It can only kill them and that it ultimately does. But in their death they are greater than the system which kills them and more glorious.

Sahti is the Heer in *kheras*. *Ishk* has delivered her from the fetters of *maya*. She understands the significance of *ishk* in her own practice. She has no illusions about the morality of the system in which she is born. She holds its values in utter contempt. To her Heer belongs to Ranjha. Her blood-brother Saida is only a usurper. She helps Ranjha to meet Heer and all three of them plan together to run away. She has the resourcefulness and energy of the revolutionary. Whatever the situation she is never found wanting. She is as much experienced in the practice of *ishk* as she is firm about its moral validity. She is unbeatable in putting across the truth of *ishk*. She is lesser than Heer only because the rendering of the theme demands it so.

Kaido embodies in himself the essence of the established order. He is evil incarnate. Every fibre of his being, every impulse in him, is anti-human. He is recognised as a trouble-maker even by the headmen, who form an active part of the system. In the normal course of things the system can afford a few human frills. At least it can make a show of them. Choochak does not like Kaido. He has no heart to encourage him. But when the crisis comes, it cannot permit the luxury of keeping the moral frills. The system appears in its stark reality. The detested Kaido becomes its undisputed leader and lawgiver. On the other side, whatever dross of illusion was left in the lovers, the crises purge them of it. They arise in their pristine purity and glory as they meet their deaths.

Warris Shah is great because like Farid he is a true Sufi. Being a true Sufi he understands that selfishness, greed and the like are deadly

sins. On the one hand they dehumanise life and on the other they are themselves the product of the dehumanised life. In spite of the idealism of his faith he imbibed the peasant plebeian revolution of his times, in its full depth, in its human purity and in its true grandeur. He accepted in its entirety what the people's imagination gave him in full measure. He saw the social reality of his time from the point of view of the revolting plebeian, that is, from the point of view of human freedom. He experienced the humanising effect of the revolution in his very bones. In spite of his religious faith, he depicted the revolution in a secular form, in the form of humanised love of two young people in full confrontation with the established order. He understood the revolution so well that he grasped its antithesis—the evil essence of that social system in its stark reality and rendered it in the human shapes of the *kazi* and *Kaido*. He has such a firm grasp of the life of his times, that each character that appears in his creation is every inch alive. The characters come alive because each has its roots firm in social reality.

<sup>1</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1968, p 38.

<sup>2</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, quoted in E. Kamenka, *Marxism and Ethics*, p 39.

<sup>3</sup> F. Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, Moscow 1962, p 131.

<sup>4</sup> *Maya* is often confused with illusion. It is the daughter of the sea goddess (the goddess of wealth) in Hindu mythology. It is acquisitiveness and greed which make a man blind to all refined things in life.

<sup>5</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, quoted in Erich Fromm (ed), *Socialist Humanism*, Allen Lane, London, 1967, p 246.

<sup>6</sup> *Warris Shah : Heer Warris*, Bhasha Vibhag, Punjab, p 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p 69.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p 68.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*, Frederick Ungar Publishing Co, New York, 1969, p 81.

## Report on Famine, 1972-73

### *Drought in Maharashtra*

*Sulabha Brahme*

PETTY-BOURGEOIS vision seldom stands the test of history. One such vision, the characterisation of the State of Maharashtra as a relatively progressive state in India, has been exploded by the recurring famine situation in the State. Maharashtra gives the clearest evidence of how big bourgeoisie in alliance with landlords deny the people even a semblance of development.

Maharashtra is considered the most advanced state in India. Industrially it is highly developed, a third of the state income being contributed by the secondary sector. It is the leading Indian state in terms of per capita industrial production, electricity consumption, bank credit disbursement, number of motor vehicles, and such other indices of development. The per capita income of the State is among the highest in India. Commercial crops like cotton, oilseeds and sugarcane are extensively grown. Rich farmers are considered to be a dominant force and the so-called co-operative movement is strong. The State is known for its efficient bureaucracy and stable government. All these together project an image of a progressive state. Actually the progressive image is being built up primarily because of the continuous growth of industry in the metropolitan city of Bombay which holds a near-monopoly position in industrial assets and employment. The overall economic position of the State appears satisfactory under the umbrella of Bombay city. However, the havoc wrought by the scarcity conditions this year calls for a close look at the character of the ruling classes in Maharashtra.

Maharashtra is chronically deficit in foodgrains and the shortfall was getting worse during the sixties. Production of foodgrains has remained stagnant since 1957-58. In fact there has been considerable decline in production of foodgrains during the last three years. Nearly 40 per cent of the population has normally to be satisfied with less than the minimum needed quantity of foodgrains. These shortages are experienced in thousands of villages all over the State. For those in authority, the prevalence of distress and local shortages of foodgrains does not, however, constitute 'a problem'. Scarcity gets official recognition only when the

existing economic system flashes danger signals. Then alone are measures taken to tide over the crisis without disturbing in essence the status quo.

The perpetual risk of drought in the State has been recognised for decades. The need to provide, on a massive scale, for water storage and soil conservation has been too obvious. The State has no lack of technical ability or of resources to undertake such works in order to meet the constant hazard of drought. The State Government managed to find the resources for completing on a basis priority the huge Koyana hydroelectric project for providing electricity to the growing industry in Bombay. In the process millions of gallons of impounded water are being literally poured down into the Arabian sea. The Government is now committed to the fabulous project of 'New Bombay' to give further boost to the industrial growth in the Bombay region. It has, however, neglected the management of the water resources so vital to the overall development of the rural economy. Water resources have been tapped intensively only in limited pockets, where capitalist development is taking place around the nucleus of the sugar industry.

In what follows is presented, a resume of the current 'scarcity' and the measures adopted by the Government to 'combat' it. The details, as they come out, present not only the wretched living conditions of the people but also the growing crisis of the path of development taken by the ruling classes.

### *Drought Current*

The year 1972-73 found Maharashtra in the grip of a severe drought. In the districts of Sholapur, Ahmednagar, Aurangabad, Bhir and Osmanabad the ravages are complete, except, of course, for the lush-green sugarcane belts where the sugar kings are the masters of their own destiny. They were merrily growing sugarcane and grapes, manufacturing crystal-sugar and bubbling wine, while the countryside was being scorched in heat, burnt brown and desolate; the people destitute and flocking the famine works in the gruelling summer heat. The foodgrains—wheat and milo (along with poisonous *dhatura* seed)—get imported from abroad, yet are not grown in the water-blessed tracts of these districts; nor can fodder be grown in the watered fields. The cattle have to be disposed of for a song or just left to die.

According to official statements, scarcity conditions were acute in nine districts and in the rest of the 16 districts some talukas were hit by the drought. The total rural population of the severely affected nine districts comes to 143 lakhs according to the 1971 census. The official estimates of the scarcity-affected are of the order of 200 lakhs people, or 57 per cent of the State's rural population. About 40 per cent of the cattle, that is, about 56 lakhs of which 27 lakhs are working bullocks, was hit by the drought. Over a third of this number is reported to have been already sold out and butchered. It is hard to say how long the rest of the famished cattle would survive. The replacement cost of the cattle

lost this year may be put at about Rs 100 crores.

The loss of crop is almost total in the drought-affected areas. For the State as a whole, the losses in the production of foodgrains due to crop failure are officially put at 55 per cent of the production of *kharif* jowar and 65 per cent of *rabi* jowar, 75 per cent of bajra, 50 per cent of rice, 50 per cent of tur and other pulses. Besides, over 70 per cent of the groundnut crop and about 40 per cent of the cotton crop are reported to have failed. The estimated loss to the economy due to the failure of crop is of the order of Rs 333 crores.

### *Drought Prone*

The extensive tract particularly in Western Maharashtra is chronically susceptible to drought. The *Imperial Gazetteer* describes a prolonged paralysing famine between 1397 and 1408 AD—popularly known as *Durgadevi* famine. Incidence of drought is reported in the *Gazetteer of Bombay State* in 17 different years during the nineteenth century and in another nine years between 1901 and 1947. In the post-independence period drought conditions occurred in 1952-53, 1965-66, 1970-71 and 1972-73.

The State Government had set up a Committee in 1958 to identify the scarcity areas in the State and to suggest ameliorative measures. In identifying the scarcity areas the Committee considered rainfall and its variability, *annevari* and land revenue suspensions and the number of occasions on which the area had been declared as scarcity-affected during the last 30 years. On the basis of these criteria, 53 talukas from nine districts, namely, Sholapur, Ahmednagar, Nasik, Poona, Osmanabad, Bhir, Aurangabad, Satara and Sangli were identified as scarcity-prone talukas. Suspecting the validity of the *annevari* classification, the State later on considered only the rainfall criteria, declaring 112 talukas out of the total 231 talukas in the State as scarcity-prone talukas, 50 of which being wholly and 62 being partly susceptible to drought. In 1970, the Irrigation Commission<sup>1</sup> identified 45 talukas from the above mentioned nine districts as drought-prone. The leeward belt, about 200 kilometres in width, adjoining the Western Ghats, stretching almost from the northern to the southern border of the State has been recognised for decades as drought-prone because of the low and uncertain rainfall conditions.

### *Official Definition of Scarcity*

Maharashtra State is chronically deficient in the production of foodgrains. If the basic needs (12 kg per month per capita) of the total population, together with seed requirements and so forth are to be met, the shortfall in normal years was of the order of 10 to 12 per cent during the 1950s. In 1965-66 there was a shortfall of about 45 per cent and in 1970-71 it was 40 per cent in relation to the total requirements. In these years, the minimum needs, particularly in the urban areas, were met through the fair price shops which were stocked with supplies imp-

orted from outside the State. In rural areas the grain requirements were partly met through traditional arrangements such as grain loans. During these drought years, though there were several pockets of distress conditions, there was no general threat of dislocating or paralysing the system as a whole. Thus failure of rains and local rural shortages of foodgrains, so far as the Government was concerned, did not constitute 'scarcity' as long it was possible to keep the economy running !

In 1971-72, according to official reports, some 15,000 villages out of the total 35,851 villages in Maharashtra were affected by the drought. The estimated shortfall in foodgrains was of the order of 50 per cent of total requirements. The drought conditions left the rural economy starved of both foodgrains and employment. The only way to contain the situation was to open up relief works at the local level for which about Rs 42 crores were spent during 1971-72. About 20 per cent of the requirement of cereals was met through the fair price shops. A major portion of these supplies was channelised to meet the basic urban needs. This made it possible to tide over the food deficiency without much outcry about 'scarcity'.

Foodgrains output during 1972-73 is reported to be about 50 per cent of normal and the estimated shortfall is of the order of 55 per cent of total requirements. The Government is totally dependent on the Centre for foodgrains. Supplies made available by the Centre are, however, considerably less than the effective demand.

Actually 40 per cent of the population in Maharashtra cannot normally meet the minimum requirements of foodgrains. In addition, employment available to rural workers is considerably reduced. This leaves large sections of rural population poor and underfed. In official circles, however, this grave scarcity is not considered as scarcity! But it was the clamour in the cities that made a difference. 'Scarcity' could no longer be feigned to be non-existent when the urban centres of Maharashtra economy felt its onslaught.

### *Operation Relief*

In 1972-73 over 25,000 villages were reportedly hit by drought conditions. With agricultural operations at a standstill, farm labourers, a large number of the cultivators and rural artisans found themselves out of work. The reported number of workers on scarcity-projects was 40 lakhs at the end of April 1973. In addition, nearly 4 lakhs of workers were employed at normal departmental works. Engaged on 54,000 different works, they constitute about 45 per cent of the labour force in the drought-affected area. These works are small in size, scattered over all the districts of the State. The works are necessarily located around the villages, thus keeping the people within the traditional rural set-up. Every effort was made to prevent any exodus of rural population to the towns and cities so that the peace and order of urban life remained undisturbed, and urban economy cushioned off from the impact of widespread scarcity.

Scarcity conditions and relief works are recognised facts of life in Maharashtra. Yet no effort has been made to draw up and keep in readiness adequate number of projects of productive works which could employ the drought-affected population meaningfully and help minimise the hardships imposed by failure of rains.

Metal breaking is one of the important relief works undertaken. This reflects the poverty of planning. Over 50 per cent of the workers on relief works in districts like Bhir and Osmanabad is reportedly employed at metal breaking centres. But the metal broken as relief operation twenty years ago during the 1952-53 famine is still lying around in many of the drought-affected areas and the quantity of metal cut during the current famine is colossal. The metal strewn over the fields is creating a problem of disposal; the human suffering inflicted in the futile metal breaking jobs is awesome. Yet ten crore man-days work has been so far put into metal breaking.

An expenditure to the tune of Rs 72 crores was incurred for the operation of relief works between August 1972 and March 1973. It is expected that another 90 crores would go into relief operations upto October 1973. This huge pumping in of money without being backed by even a rudimentary system of rationing of the supplies of essential commodities is cutting down the levels of living of the people as the prices are galloping day by day and there is acute shortage in the supply of cereals.

### *Misery of the Masses*

In March 1973, the official maximum daily wage rate was Rs 2.50. The earnings which labourers actually make are lower, there being several hurdles in reaching the maximum. For example, the task set is often high considering the state of health of these workers. The classification of soil is not always properly made. Time and energy have often to be spent to reach the relief work-sites. Besides, phoney enrolments and other malpractices cut into the earnings of those who actually toil.

The daily earnings of the labourers on relief works as reported generally varied between Re 1 and Rs 2, there being considerable variation in the average earnings on different types of works. There is no provision for a paid weekly holiday. Assuming that the workers are employed on all the working days of the month, the average daily per capita income works out to about 50 paise for a family of two earners and three dependents. The foodgrain supplies available through fair price shops are extremely meagre and uncertain. With short supply position and high ruling prices people are unable to meet even half their foodgrain requirements with these earnings.

The Government of Maharashtra has not made any serious effort to procure cereals from the districts which are not affected by the drought. The stocks with the farmers or the traders are not being requisitioned.

The distribution of the public stocks of foodgrains continues through licensed traders. With acute shortages of foodgrains the diversion of the quotas supplied to fair price shops can hardly be prevented. Wheat and jowar have disappeared from the open market. Even in the black market supplies are extremely uncertain and the prices are spiralling up day by day. Yet the responsibility of guaranteed supply of foodgrains through statutory rationing is not being accepted by the Government. Consequently people are compelled to eat almost every variety of edible leaves and roots (and in some cases non-edible) or to slay the cattle for survival. The rural population is sinking deeper into debt in a bid for another short lease of life.

The problem of drinking water has also become desperate. The Fifth Five Year Plan Approach document of the Maharashtra Government admits that about 10,000 villages need attention in this respect. This is true even during the normal rainfall years. With the wells and streams dried up, water of all colours, tastes and odours was being used to quench the thirst. According to official figures the shortage is extremely acute in 5298 villages in the nine severely affected districts.

With over a third of the cattle population having already perished and perhaps another third totally emaciated, the problem of tillage this summer assumed serious dimensions particularly for the smaller cultivators. The problem of obtaining seeds is equally serious. There is still the problem of finding means for surviving till the ensuing *kharif* crop gets harvested.

The State Government is looking up wholly to the Central Government for the supply of foodgrains as well as for the financial resources for relief operations. The Maharashtra Government did not make any attempt in the 1973-74 budget to raise resources through special measures like cess on income tax, surcharge on profit or any other special tax on urban industry, business and professions to meet at least part of the needs of the drought-affected population. In the Central Budget also the rich, especially the urban rich, have been let scot-free and there is an increased dosage of deficit financing. This has led to a hyper-inflationary situation; consequently, it is the poorer strata of society which are being made to pay for the relief works depressing their sub-standard living to lower levels.

### *Irrigation*

The agricultural crisis in Maharashtra is deep-rooted and the problem needs to be set in the long-term perspective. As almost a third of the State is drought-prone, it is important that minimum protection by way of assured water supply is provided in those areas. It will be worthwhile to examine briefly the efforts made so far to extend irrigation facilities in the State and to see how these facilities are being put to use.

In the pre-independence period, the major irrigation projects completed mainly as protection works such as Pravara, Godavari and Nira

canals were confined to Western Maharashtra. The Nizam rule in Hyderabad provided no irrigation facilities in the Marathwada region. In the Vidarbha region—a relatively assured rainfall area—the two paddy-growing districts Bhandara and Chanda had tank irrigation facilities. In the entire State, about 2.3 lakh hectares were irrigated through canals while the extent of tank irrigation was about 1.8 lakh hectares. Well irrigation was developed unevenly covering 4 lakh hectares and accounting for about 48 per cent of the total irrigated area. 1951 figures put the total area irrigated from all the sources at 8.5 lakh hectares. This constituted only 5.3 per cent of the gross cropped area in the State.

After the planning era was ushered in in 1951 a small beginning to augment the surface irrigation facilities was made. The major and medium irrigation projects initiated during the First Plan period were expected to benefit about 0.9 lakh hectares. The expected benefit from the new schemes launched during the Second Plan was to the tune of 4.2 lakh hectares. Due to the backlog of the on-going schemes little new work was taken up during the Third Plan period.

The ultimate irrigation potential of the schemes—major and medium—launched during the First and Second Plan periods has been placed at 5.1 lakh hectares. However, the actual increase in the area irrigated by canals during the period 1951-71 was only 0.7 lakh hectares.

The Irrigation Commission of Maharashtra (1960) had estimated the total area irrigable from surface resources at about 53 lakh hectares or about 26 per cent of the total cultivated area requiring a capital outlay of about Rs 1430 crores. As against this the actual irrigated land by surface irrigation is about 3.0 lakh hectares in 1970-71, that is, only about 6 per cent of the potential. The figures clearly indicate the neglect of surface irrigation in the State.

Liberal loans are, nevertheless, being made available for digging up private wells. The area irrigated by wells doubled between 1951 and 1971. Another strategy has been to encourage the use of river water by lift irrigation. The area watered by lift irrigation increased substantially during the sixties. In the new additions to the irrigated hectareage in the last twenty years, the contribution of well-irrigation was 75 per cent whereas the share of canals was only 8 per cent. Even today the gross irrigated area stands around eight per cent of the total gross cropped area.

There is thus an urgent need in Maharashtra to undertake, on a massive scale, major and medium as well as minor irrigation projects. As three quarters of the cultivated land is not likely to be benefited by surface irrigation it is necessary to take up an extensive programme of minor irrigation works like percolation tanks, bunding of *nalas*, and a planned programme for construction of wells. Programmes of land levelling, bunding, afforestation and the like have to be combined with irrigation to help soil and water conservation. All these schemes have to be worked out in an integrated manner for each area unit.

It is also important to note how the water resources made available are being utilised. The area under sugarcane was about 9 per cent of the irrigated area in 1955-56 and the water used for that crop at around 48 per cent. In 1968-69, sugarcane accounted for 13 per cent of the irrigated area and used about 58 per cent of the water available for irrigation. The figures clearly speak of the *modus operandi* of the irrigated agriculture in the State.

### Conclusion

The analysis of the drought situation in Maharashtra provides ample evidence of the widespread distress conditions. Yet, the scarcity is not recognised by the Government as 'scarcity', as long as the status quo can be maintained. Careful planning and conservancy of water resources and their proper utilisation would have minimised the sufferings of the mass of people not only in 1972-73 but in the earlier years as well. In the pre-1947 days the Congress party could rightly find fault with 'British colonial indifference'. But it is impossible to find any scapegoat in the post-1947 period as the Congress has ruled and continues to rule the country.

The lack of a purposeful irrigation policy in Maharashtra has to be seen more as an index of the strength of the landlord elements rather than one of technical or financial incapacity of the State. A report of the survey team of IIT students who volunteered to provide technical help in the construction of percolation tanks in Osmanabad district reveals the character of the ruling classes. The team found that,

... wherever the rich peasant feels that he is not likely to benefit from the percolation tanks, he obstructs its construction. At one place in Osmanabad taluka, the landowner sent some *goondas* with *lathis* to greet us with the message that we should pack off. . . In another village in Bhum taluka we were asked to stop the survey work and were threatened with murder unless we left at once. The MLA from this area owns quite some land. He wanted the tanks to be constructed on particular sites. The Government engineer talked to us very favourably about these sites without ever having seen them or known anything about them.<sup>2</sup>

This experience points to an important aspect of the agrarian situation in Maharashtra, namely, the vicious nature of land relations which impedes the involvement of the people in the development process—a crucial prerequisite for economic growth.

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Irrigation Commission, 1972*, Vol II, Ministry of Irrigation and Power, New Delhi, 1972, pp 241-49 and 457.

<sup>2</sup> Achyut Godbole, "Productive Relief Works for the Rich", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol VIII, Number 17, April 28, 1973, p 773.

## NOTES

### *Third Pay Commission Need-based Minimum Wage Denied*

INDIA is a country where the immense majority, nearly two-thirds of the people, live below the poverty line. Under the present pattern of capitalist development, the right to work is a far cry. It is natural for the toiling masses to ask for a need-based minimum wage to ensure the basic necessities of life. In other words, the need-based minimum wage is a minimum subsistence level wage which is just reasonable to give an adequate standard of life for an average worker's family consisting of three consumption units for one earner. Below this is starvation level wage, a sub-human wage—tied up with inhuman conditions of work and living, signifying in the historical context a feudal-colonial framework inherited by the bourgeoisie and the landlords.

One of the familiar political gimmicks played by the ruling Congress Government over the decades has been to sidetrack legitimate demands like need-based minimum wage of the working people by appointing commissions.

The Third Pay Commission sat over the demand for a need-based wage for three long years; wasted Rs 74 lakhs of public money and ultimately denied this basic demand, probably to carry out the wishes of the Government. Once again the hypocritical slogans of 'garibi hatao' and 'social justice' of the Congress Government stand nakedly exposed before the exploited masses of the Indian people.

The demand for a need-based minimum wage was focussed in the massive strikes of the Central Government employees in 1960 and 1968. Earlier the workers had rejected the wage-freeze policy of the First Five Year Plan. The country-wide struggles waged by the working class at the beginning of the Second Plan forced the Government to enter into a tripartite agreement at the 15th Indian Labour Conference (ILC) in 1957 accepting the norms of a need-based minimum wage and for appointment of wage boards to fix such wages in various industries. These norms were meant to govern the wage policy under the Second Plan.

*ILC Norms*

The new norms agreed upon at the 15th ILC postulated a standard working class family as consisting of three consumption units for one earner, and recognised their minimum needs as a net intake of 2700 calories as recommended by Dr Aykroyd for an average adult of moderate activity; per capita consumption of 18 yards of cloth per annum which would give the average worker's family of four a total of 72 yards; two-room housing at minimum rent under the subsidised housing scheme for low income groups; and, miscellaneous items constituting 20 per cent of the total minimum wage.

The ILC recommendations form a landmark in that it provides a standard for wage bargaining. But despite the tripartite agreement the demand for need-based wage has not so far been implemented by the Government. None of the wage boards appointed by the Government has incorporated ILC norms in their recommendations.

Soon after the 15th ILC and in the context of the accelerated tempo of the movement of the Central Government employees and the threatened all-India strike by the Post and Telegraph employees in August 1957 for wage increases to meet the rapid and high rise in the cost of living, the Government was forced to appoint the Second Pay Commission. The employees demanded adherence to the norms of the 15th ILC while fixing their minimum wage. But on the specific advice from the Finance Ministry to regard them as mere recommendations of the Indian Labour Conference and that 'Government have, at no time, committed themselves to taking executive action to enforce the recommendations', the Second Pay Commission, true to its character, threw to the winds the norms of need-based minimum wage as recommended by 15th ILC. Basing its report on the invented formula of a "vegetarian diet", scaling down the calory consumption and substituting animal protein by groundnut protein, the Second Pay Commission offered a paltry increase of Rs 5 for class IV employees and raised the minimum wage from Rs 75 to Rs 80. Against these developments, which resulted from the political decision of the ruling Congress party, despite the tripartite agreement and collective bargaining, the protests of the employees spread far and wide. All this makes it amply clear how the wage policy of the Congress Government was heavily loaded against the working population in general and the industrial workers in particular whose contribution to increasing productivity had been rapidly adding to the mounting profits of the employers, the superprofit hunters. This marked bias of the ruling Congress in favour of the monopolists makes the truth abundantly clear that those who hold the commanding economic positions also wield the political power. And it was this political power which manifested itself in a crude form when the Central Government crushed the employees' strike in 1960 and again in 1968.

This is how the 15th ILC agreement, which remained a pious

agreement on paper, was first rejected within two years of its adoption and finally 'murdered' by the Congress Government. Yet the utter reformist leadership of the AITUC had no qualms in claiming that "It was only after independence that the whole framework of colonial-cum-feudal wage was first ideologically smashed".<sup>1</sup> It is indeed shameful that even 15 years after the agreement, the Congress Government continues to deny the working class one of its vital demands. The impunity of the Government is all the more glaring against the background of growing inequalities of income and wealth in the country. It seems that the Government is more anxious to freeze the wage rather than ensure a need-based minimum. This warped approach of the ruling Congress Party is further indicated in the dilatoriness of the Third Pay Commission.

### *Composition and Terms of Reference*

The employees were anxious about the composition of the Commission and its terms of reference. As for composition, there were some members whose anti-working class bias was well known. In a way the inclusion of certain members foreshadowed the outcome of the Commission on such a vital question as the need-based minimum wage.

One of the important demands of the employees was that a nominee of their own should be included as a member of the Pay Commission. In answer to the protests against not conceding this demand it was pointed out that Professor V R Pillai, one of the three members of the Commission, (the other being Prof Nihar Ranjan Ray, Prof A K Das Gupta with an ICS Member-Secretary, Sri H. N. Ray and Sri Raghubar Dayal, Ex-Judge of the Supreme Court as Chairman) was fully conversant with labour laws and labour problems. Pillai's experience and knowledge, indeed, were limited to functioning as Chairman of certain wage committees in Kerala.

In fact, when the Commission was constituted, the terms of reference excluded the mention of need-based minimum wage as recommended by the 15th ILC. Only after concerted pressure exerted by the Central Government employees did the Government concede its inclusion in the terms of reference. And it was specifically clarified by a subsequent Resolution that "...while enquiring into the level of minimum remuneration, the Commission may examine the Central Government employees' demand for a need-based minimum wage based on the recommendations of the 15th Indian Labour Conference".<sup>2</sup> Another question referred to the Commission embraced the principles governing the structure of emoluments, conditions of service (desirable and feasible) and death-cum-retirement benefits of the 4 million Central Government employees including personnel of the All India Services and the Armed Forces.

### *Computation of Minimum Wage*

Computing the cost of food on the norms recommended by the 15th

ILC, the estimate of the need-based minimum wage based on the consumer price index average (for industrial workers) of 200 for the twelve months ending October 1972 (1960=100), would be as follows :

TABLE I  
NEED-BASED MINIMUM WAGE ACCORDING TO THE 15TH ILC NORMS<sup>3</sup>

Particulars	Balanced 3000 calories	Dr Aykroyd's diet 2700 calories (net)
	Rs	Rs
1 Cost of food		
Bombay	243.00	218.70
Calcutta	252.00	227.61
Delhi	232.20	208.98
Madras	227.70	204.93
Average of four cities	238.95	215.05
2 Clothing	10.50	10.50
3 House-rent	25.50	25.50
(Average of Integrated subsidised housing scheme rates for the four cities.)		
4 Miscellaneous expenditure at 20% of the total	68.74	62.75
Total expenditure (Need-based minimum wages)	343.69	313.75

Other estimates regarding the minimum wage including those submitted to the Commission by several employees' federations, namely, the Confederation of Central Government Employees and the All India Railwaymen's Federation and others, when adjusted for the 12-month average prices for the period ending October 31, 1972, and based on the National Nutrition Advisory Committee (NNCA) diet formula, range between Rs 296 and Rs 314. However, keeping the interest of the nation in view and in the spirit of compromise, almost all the employees agreed to urge for a minimum wage of Rs 250 per month.

After examining the 15th ILC recommendations and the demands of several employees' organisations for minimum remuneration based on the 15th ILC norms, the Commission came to consider the 'feasibility' of such wage in an evasive manner. Under the guise of 'feasibility' the Commission has circumvented the terms of reference to arrive at its own formula of 'vegetarian diet schedule'. Thus, the Commission arrived at a minimum wage of Rs 196 per month for a class IV employee—for *three adult consumption units including the earner*, while the ILC had postulated *three consumption units excluding the earner*. This shows the utter disregard of the norms set by the ILC and the diet formula evolved by the National

Nutrition Advisory Committee, to which the employees as well as the Ministry of Labour and Employment had agreed.

TABLE 2  
ACTUAL FIGURES OBTAINED BY THE COMMISSION<sup>4</sup>

Items	Expenditure Rs per month
1 Food (Simple average of four cities)	131.70
2 Clothing @ Rs 1.91 per metre (Rs. 1.75 per yard)	10.50
3 House rent @ 71½% of the total	14.71
4 Miscellaneous expenditure @ 20% of the total	39.28
	196.14
	(Rs 196 in round figures)

Having arrived at this manipulated and quite misleading estimate, the Commission under some 'extenuating circumstance', proceeded to fix the lowest remuneration at the time the employee enters the service. On the hypothesis that the employee may not even be married at the time of entering the service and hence is not usually expected to be responsible for three adult units including himself, the Commission views that the starting salary need not be fixed higher than Rs 185 per month. It further states that at the end of five years of service such an employee will automatically get the minimum remuneration as computed on its concept of Rs 196 per month. In financial terms this wage increase would make an addition of Rs 144.60 crores to the annual wages bill of the Central Government. It should be underlined here that the maximum salary recommended for higher income brackets among the IAS category comes to Rs 3500 and thus the disparity ratio between the lowest-paid and the highest-paid is kept as high as 1:19.

The Commission further goes on to rationalise its minimum remuneration of Rs 185 by making comparison with the estimates based on the document, *Approach to the Fifth Five year Plan*, and draws satisfaction in giving the minimum remuneration 'appreciably' above the below 'poverty line' wage. The estimate in the approach document is based on the minimum consumption requirement of Rs 40 per capita per month at October 1972 prices, or say, Rs 37 at December 1972 prices. This is 'poverty line' consumption as defined in the approach document.

In real terms, with the value of the Rupees rapidly going down and with frightening increase in the prices of essential commodities this minimum consumption is the starvation level consumption at the below subsistence or below 'poverty line' wage. In other words it is starvation level wage which has been envisaged under the Fifth Plan with a determined aim to search for a national minimum wage on which the wages can be freed.

In computing the food costs in particular the Commission seems to

have committed a fraud on the masses of consumers by adopting the statistical manipulations of the Government machinery designed to understate the actual increases in the cost of living. For instance, in view of the acute shortage of essential consumer goods, there exists a wide gap between the controlled prices and open market prices. By using the official indices, the Commission has made further inroads into the real worth of the minimum wages. *Thus what the Third Pay Commission offered as minimum remuneration is starvation level wage in real terms.* And the vital demand of the Central Government employees for a need-based minimum wage based on the norms of 15th ILC stands rejected by the Commission on the basis of these spurious arguments.

### *Spurious Argument*

Quite in tune with the ruling party's populist rhetoric like 'garibi hatao', the Commission, without questioning the basic norms and ethos of bureaucratic administrative hierarchy, comes to express its concern for the 'millions of less fortunate compatriots' to whom the Congress Government has not so far been able to provide even 'the barest essentials'. Hence they plead that any additional funds made available by 'economy drive' and 'tax realisation' (which have been a miserable failure so far) should be first used for the 'amelioration of the unemployed and underemployed'. In advancing this line of argument, the Commission has displayed an ostrich-like attitude. They must have known that unemployment is the scourge of the capitalist system as well as of landlordism and semi-feudal relations in land.

It is through the creation and expansion of the reserve army of labour and intensification of the exploitation of labour by the introduction of labour-saving devices and technology that the capitalists and landlords seek to further depress the wages enhance their surplus value and super profits. Quite contrary to the text-bookish assumptions the exploiting classes fritter away a good part of the surplus in wasteful consumption both on private and government account. Unemployment and underemployment will remain as long as the system of exploitation and waste lasts. It is indeed strange that the Commission consisting of 'learned' economists and 'eminent' public men should suggest that the solution to the problem of unemployment and underemployment lies in denying the working classes the need-based minimum wages. Nothing more fatuous can be imagined. Why did they not suggest a ceiling on income, especially in the private sector? Why did they recommend enhanced salaries and allowances at the higher income brackets? Why did they not recommend the narrowing down of the income differential say to 1:10? How can they betray their own class interests and those of their allies?

Yet another piece of erroneous argument employed by the Commission to deny the need-based minimum wage is that it should be realistic and such standards may raise expectations all around, which would be

incapable of fulfilment because monetary wages would soon be eroded by a rise in prices or again by further rise in prices.

If the Commission and the Congress Government are 'serious about mastering the economic crisis they should first *diagnose the malady* before deciding on the remedies. Because of the slow rate of wage incomes in real terms they are being eroded by rising prices. Clearly the Government *lacks the heart* to face the fact that its policies have failed to contain the impact of rising prices'<sup>5</sup> (Emphasis added).

Without raising its finger at the absence of any policy of the Government on income and prices, which has only enabled the monopolists to amass wealth on the one hand and has virtually eroded the wages on the other, the Commission has raised the bogey of 'cost-push inflation' to deprive the working classes of a living wage. One wonders why such a high level Commission should be blind to the fact that the wages and salaries bill of the Central Government as a percentage of the total revenue expenditure has fallen from 33.5 per cent to 28.3 per cent over 1960-61 to 1970-71. A study by the Reserve Bank of India shows that wage costs as a proportion of value added by manufacture have also fallen over the years.

"If the Finance Ministry and the Reserve Bank were in touch with the economy they should have known the elementary fact that *wages do not constitute the dominant element in the economy nor are they the main factor behind the inflation*'<sup>6</sup> (Emphasis added).

Thus it is clear that the argument of wage increases causing further price rise is quite irrelevant to the present price inflation. On the contrary, "inflationary pressures have been haunting the economy ever since the last years of the Second Plan".<sup>7</sup> And during this period the Government employees did not have any wage increase in real terms. This has led to a continued erosion in real wages of the workers and middle class employees.

There is no clear indication of any move towards tapping the huge amount of black money which, "even on a conservative estimate, would exceed Rs 10,000 crores",<sup>8</sup> towards plugging the leakage of foreign exchange amounting to more than Rs 250 crores every year; to stopping the concessions and inducements being allowed to monopoly houses on this or that pretext or under this or that committee's recommendation. Thanks to the thoroughly corrupt tax collecting machinery, there is sizeable amount of income tax arrears amounting to crores of rupees under the existing loopholes for tax evasion. Coupled with this is the enormous amount of resources frittered away in the luxury consumption and non-developmental projects and unnecessary expenditure on defence. One glaring fact of gross misuse of resources is the enormous increase in expenses on the Central Reserve Police (CRP) and Assam Rifles, the vastly expanded paramilitary establishments. Considering all this the plea of lack of resources is utterly unconvincing.

It is natural, therefore, that several employees' organisations have

demanding scrapping of the Third Pay Commission Report. They have reiterated their demand for fixing the need-based minimum wage at the bilateral level so that they can face the continued erosion of real wages as long as the Government does not adopt a firm income and price policy. The simmering discontent, as it is surfacing in the resolve of the Post and Telegraph employees, Railwaymen, Defence employees and others will, in all probability, develop into mass struggles in the days to come demonstrating 'unity in action' of the vast masses of Central, state and local Government employees and the working class in general.

PREMENDRA

<sup>1</sup> *Twentyninth Session of the AITUC*, AITUC Publication. p 58.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Third Pay Commission, 1973*, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, Vol I, chapter I, p 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p 55.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p 60.

<sup>5</sup> *The Economic Times*, (editorial) June 23, 1973.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* -

<sup>7</sup> "Budget Highlights", *Social Scientist*, April 1973, p 47.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p 52.

## BOOK REVIEW

### Review Article

#### *Neo-Liberal History or An Imperialist Apologia?*

ANIL SEAL, *THE EMERGENCE OF INDIAN NATIONALISM : COMPETITION AND COLLABORATION IN THE LATER NINETEENTH CENTURY*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, pp 416.

This is the first and most important thing to learn about India—that there is not and never was an India . . . .

John Strachey, 1888

In, so shapeless, so jumbled a bundle of societies, there were not two nations, there was not one nation, there was no nation at all. What was India? —a graveyard of old nationalities and mother of new nationalities struggling to be born.<sup>2</sup>

Anil Seal, 1968

WITH characteristic clarity the eminent historian, Geoffrey Barraclough has in a recent article, discussed the basic features of the liberal view of German history, which would apply equally to all liberal historical interpretation. Liberal history is recognised by a stress on the "primary role of ideas in history", and "a belief that history is shaped by ideas rather than social relations and the interplay of economic interests". There is also a "deep-seated elitist bias", and an assumption that "the so-called political and social elite is the element in any society that determines the course of events."<sup>3</sup> Somewhat similar have been the features of historical writings on modern India where the liberal approach to history has ruled the roost for a very long time.

Overtly liberal attitudes in history are no longer respectable in the second half of the twentieth century. As a result, now, the old liberal history appears in new garbs and guises. Often in clever attempts at a liberal restatement of history, any allusion to the old liberal historiography is scrupulously avoided and the 'new' interpretation of history is made on the basis of an elaborate marshalling of new facts, figures and statistics culled from various contemporary government sources. A case in point

is the much discussed and sometimes much praised book of Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*. Seal, despite his efforts at an up-to-dateness as far as his style and use of terminology are concerned, betrays his basically liberal predilections when he talks about the emergence of modern politics in India: "Education was one of the chief determinants of these politics, and their genesis is clearly linked with those Indians who had been schooled in western methods" (p 16). Education receives the closest possible attention and the book is profusely padded with a number of charts and tables on English education and related topics. For instance, we are provided with tables of the number of educated by province, 1864-85 (p 18); the growth of education in arts colleges in British India, 1870-91 (p 19); knowledge of English by caste among literate male Hindus of Bengal, 1891 (p 62); growth of education at the universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, 1857-88 (p 355); employment of graduates: All-India review by region until 1882 (p 357); and a host of others. In glaring contrast the economic condition of India receives scant attention. Seal's predilections become manifest when, in a book comprising of more than 400 pages, only five pages are devoted to any discussion of the Indian economy.

Although there is much in Seal's book that is not new, it would be erroneous to surmise that it is merely a polished repetition of what the early historians had already written. What is new is an analytical discussion about the nature of Indian society in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, from which is derived the notion that "genuine nationalism" did not exist in India.<sup>4</sup> In this discussion, there is a curious conglomeration of a variety of theoretical formulations that have been enmeshed in each other: the Weberian analysis of social structure and the identification of social status groups, the Namierite structural analysis and Pareto's theory of the circulation of elites.

Seal differs from the early liberals in more ways than one. The most striking divergence is to be found in his understanding of the concept of nationalism. The early liberal historians in the German Idealist tradition tended to emphasise the 'enlightening' idea of nationalism and freedom, so much so, in fact, that sometimes the objective factors that gave rise to nationalism were overlooked completely. All mass participation—whatever there was—was ascribed solely to the western ideas of freedom and self-rule. Seal too stresses these ideas, which to him were the most powerful instruments by which the lower strata of Indian society was later drawn into the national movement. But Seal deals with the ideology of nationalism in a distinctly demeaning way. To him, nationalism is an artful ideology—a successful gadget and nothing else. Similar has been the attitude of many western social scientists to revolutionary ideologies all over the world. For instance, Leninism becomes a mere "eclectic technique enabling one to respond to power situations".<sup>5</sup>

Seal's argument has the elegant symmetry of a geometrical theorem. He starts from the basic assumption of intense competition in a 'cockpit'

of rival religions, languages, sects, communities and castes. British rule by providing new job opportunities "re-emphasised the rivalries" and "sharpened" the "struggle between its inhabitants." The nationalist movements, were "native (political) mobilisations" directed chiefly against each other, not against foreign overlordship. They emerged as a result of educated men taking "to the technique of secular organisation". A broader base to the movement was contrived by "a campaign of deliberate incitement", which fabricated the distasteful spectre of the Raj as a giant exploiter. This sort of propaganda found sympathetic ears among the lower and the lesser educated strata of Indian society. The government found itself paralysed into inaction due to a limited choice of alternatives, while the movement "which the sword could not cut down" (p 193) pushed forward inexorably towards its predestined end.

Before discussing the more fundamental issues raised by such a treatment of Indian nationalism, it would be profitable to point out some major flaws in the sequence of the story narrated by Seal. The linkage of the local political organisations leading to a national movement is not explained satisfactorily. "With all these local rivalries and glaring national differences," the local elites could yet "work together" at "the level of all-India" (p 113). Why this sudden need for a joint alliance? We are provided with a ready answer: "in so doing, their main purpose may well have been to strengthen their position inside their local societies" (p 113). Though the explanation may be partially true, it makes the plot of the story rather thin. It does not explain the basic unity of the national movement, despite the various internal differences. In fact Seal makes repeated attempts to prove that nationalism in India had neither a unity of purpose, nor of organisation. Such an attitude to the national movement does not square with his description of a compulsive urge of Indians towards a national organisation, specially when he deals with the foundation of the Indian National Congress.

The most glaring weakness in Seal's argument is the complete blacking-out of the economic implications of British rule in India. The Raj existed, but colonial exploitation was never associated with it. Thus imperialism as understood by Seal becomes an empty concept devoid of any real meaning. The reasons behind the adoption of such an attitude have been expertly explained by V G Kiernan. "The jolly old empire" that till a few years ago was remembered with a great deal of nostalgic regret as well as pride has been totally discredited by now. "But capitalism, or jolly old free-enterprise" is still much valued and respected and "its unsavoury connections of former days are best forgotten. Imperialism was bad, but capitalism had nothing to do with it".<sup>6</sup> There was a time when the British historians emphasised the role of British rule in bringing about change in India. Now when faced with facts that such changes did more harm than good, these changes are denied. While Seal takes great pains to deny any far-reaching economic impact of British rule, the earlier writers like Valentine Chirol wrote that western industrialism's

"transportation to India has been one of the most striking phenomena of British rule".<sup>7</sup> Seal insists that there had been no "sharp changes in the structure of the economy" (p 341). He ignores completely the phenomena of economic imperialism, as any emphasis on the issue would make the real cause for the clash of interests of the Indians and the Raj more than obvious. One only needs reminding Seal that imperialism does not exist in an institutional vacuum. A state apparatus comprising an elaborate administrative machinery has to be built. And that is accompanied by far-reaching changes. It is interesting to note that Seal has gone a step further than his brilliant guru, John Gallagher. A few years ago, writing about imperialism in Africa the latter did not deny that economic benefits were eventually extracted from colonial possessions. What he questioned was only whether initially economic motives had anything to do with imperial annexations.<sup>8</sup>

The entire argument of Seal rests upon a social analysis of late nineteenth century India, which denies the existence of classes. Many perceptive social thinkers have decried the tendency of some of the western scholars to deny the existence of social classes in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.<sup>9</sup> Seal emphasises that in India economic changes "were not sufficient to give India social classes based on economic categories" (p 34). For India "a conceptual system based on elites rather than on classes would seem more promising" (p 341). What was the organisational basis of these elite groups? According to Seal these groups and their respective associations "must be related to the religious, the caste, the linguistic and the economic situations in which they lived" (p 23). Caste "tended to sharpen the rivalries among Hindus by marshalling the competitors into teams" (p 28). Also dormant linguistic groups by a resurgence "could provide both a symbol point of unions for movements designed to challenge the pre-eminence of their neighbours" (p 30). Nationalism in India is believed to have emerged as a result of the competition and rivalry of these mutually competing elite groups. Language, region, community and so on, all provided focal points of social organisation; but Seal's overbearing stress is on caste. Caste in India, according to him, "took the place of class solidarity of the west" (p 30). Hence the role of caste in Indian politics in the last quarter of the nineteenth century requires special attention.

In the later nineteenth century there was no militant caste consciousness in the sense there is today in some areas. The emerging classes, for instance the men in the professions, were then united by a common intellectual and social background and not by any strong caste considerations. The views of Seal might find favour with the behaviouralist political scientists and his model might be employed to construct models of party politics on the basis of the interaction of caste and politics: it is totally insufficient to explain the dynamics of the emergence of nationalism. Politics in a specific, localised area might be understood sometimes in these terms. They can never be applied on a national level. If

all the castes were competing against each other how could there be any national movement at all?

Seal's emphasis on elite conflict leading to the national movement and then to independence is to stress sheer political opportunism as the overriding consideration of the nationalist leaders. But if internal conflict among Indians was to become the cause for the eventual withdrawal of the British, the administrators would have gone out of their way to resolve such a conflict. On the contrary, they made use of every possible opportunity to further divide and sub-divide the nation to weaken the national movement. 'Divide and Rule' was, in fact, one of the fundamental maxims of the Empire. At places the social analysis is stretched to ridiculous proportions. A typical elite group was the Bengali *bhadralok*—literally meaning respectable people—which comprised the Brahmin, Baidya and Kayastha castes. The interest of the elites was divorced from that of the rest of the nation; "neither solidarity nor sympathy linked these elites with the societies to which they belonged" (p 112). Language formed another barrier and made impossible "any concerted action between the learned and the rude" (p 46). Seal finds the Indians quite divided at the level of consciousness, but he forgets that however much the Indians disliked each other, and the *bhadralok* disliked the lower castes, there existed a clear-cut racial distinction between the Firangee and the Hindustani. The racial animosity between the foreigner and the 'native' was an important factor in the nationalist struggle.

Before we proceed with any analysis of the social scene on the basis of elite groups, we have to ask the basic question—who were the *bhadralok*? Is it not largely a fictitious category? Broomfield distinguishes the *bhadralok* chiefly by "their abstention from manual labour". Where in the world does the dominant class ever indulge in manual labour? And the distinctiveness in deportment and speech is not derived from the membership of any caste. It is associated with economic and social status. There is about as much difference between a *bhadra* and *abhadra* as there is between a person residing on Fifth Avenue and another at Harlem in New York. Moreover, both a Brahmin cook and a Brahmin zamindar should belong to the social status group of the *bhadralok* as described by Seal and Broomfield. Yet, one does not have to be a historian to know that there is much difference between the two. Not only is the concept of the *bhadralok* based on factually erroneous assumptions, but as a tool for the understanding of modern Indian history it has little use.

Seal also argues the case for a partial application of Pareto's theory on the circulation of elites to explain the rise of nationalism in India. However, this theoretical model suffers from grave defects even at the level of abstraction.<sup>11</sup> It presupposes a basically uninterrupted social scene where a declining or an old elite—in this case the British bureaucracy—is revitalised by absorbing vigorous elements from the non-elite groups in the society or is displaced by a new one, when access of individuals to the old elite is stopped. Seal would like to believe what George

Hamilton the Secretary of State for India said in 1899, that the *bhadralok* was fighting "not British rule but Anglo-Indian bureaucracy".<sup>12</sup> A structural analysis on Namierite lines too, cannot be applied to broad themes involving a sustained narrative. It can only be usefully employed in analysing static situations.<sup>13</sup>

Seal has not applied uniform standards to his enquiry. In dealing with the Muslims he makes a major methodological departure. Whereas the Hindus are supposed to be divided on the basis of caste, sect, region and language, a "linkage of Muslims uniting the community from all corners of the subcontinent" (p 340) is observed. Muslims, according to him formed a separate national category right from the beginning. This is contrary to facts. Seal himself contradicts his thesis when he admits that the "community was not homogeneous. Language, caste and economic standing worked together to divide Muslim no less than Hindu from Hindu" (p 300). Yet, Seal talks of Muslim rule before the coming of the British. It is absurd to imagine, as Irfan Habib points out, that "all Muslims sharing equally from their power were the rulers and Hindus the subjects".<sup>14</sup> In fact the ruling class comprised both Hindu and Muslim nobility. Moreover, as K M Ashraf has pointed out, "it is difficult to distinguish the lower classes of Muslims from the low masses of Hindus".<sup>15</sup> The two were culturally very close in spite of the consciousness of the Muslims, as of any other minority group, of a separate identity. In many places the Muslims were the majority group, and there probably such a psychology did not work. How this consciousness was later blown up out of proportion is another story. Here, it would be sufficient to note that a Bengali Muslim had much greater affinity with a Bengali Hindu than with a Punjabi Muslim.

Due to a preoccupation with disproving the notion of nationalism in India and in the process to allude also to the non-existence of economic imperialism—which is a most difficult task by any standards—Seal bases his arguments on large masses of evidence, cited in the copious footnotes. But the relation between evidence and deductions therefrom is often flimsy. An example would illustrate the shallowness of his analysis. Much work has been done on the Bengali indigo riots that took place between 1859 and 1862 and the Deccan riots of 1875. It has been proved conclusively that these riots broke out due to the coming of a new system of agrarian relationships and the increasing economic hardship for the bulk of the agricultural population. The source of all this, of course, was the working of the colonial process set in motion by the imposition of British rule. However, to Seal, "The indigo rioters rose against agrarian oppression, not against alien control" (p 13). He adds cryptically that the suggestion that it was alien control that had in the first place caused all the oppression came from the "intellectuals of Calcutta" (p 13). So what? That doesn't prove or disprove anything. And Seal's logic here is based on illogic—if the blind man cannot see the elephant, the elephant doesn't exist! A lack of awareness on the part of the uneducated peasants can be

comprehensible. But when a trained historian, with the advantage of hindsight, chooses to echo the same viewpoint, it becomes a case of fatal naivety.

There are a few redeeming features in the book. The prose is lively and moves swiftly. Credit is also due to Seal for the selection and processing of a number of useful tables on education and related subjects in spite of the fact that much of the work was done for him by the Indian Statistical Institute. The one unimpeachable statement made in the book is: "The highly uneven nature of development in India has been reflected in the highly uneven speeds of political mobilization" (p 23). Here, for once, Seal is treading on solid ground. Had he developed this line a little further it would have become clear to him that what appeared as internal rivalries and squabbles were really the regional variations of the movement. One wonders whether the purpose of the book is to establish the origins of nationalism, or whether the author has utilised the opportunity to disprove the existence of nationalism in India.

JAYANT PRASAD

<sup>1</sup> John Strachey, *India*, London, 1888, p 5.

<sup>2</sup> Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, Cambridge, 1968, p 339.

<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey Barraclough, "The Liberals and German History: Part II", *New York Review of Books*, Vol XIX, No 7, November 2, 1972, p 32.

<sup>4</sup> Seal writes: "activities inconvenient to the British were judged to be self-interested machinations rather than genuine nationalisms" (p 191) and "... the apologists of British rule were hardly mistaken in asserting that it (the national movement) did not square with the genuine nationalisms of nineteenth century Europe" (p 342).

<sup>5</sup> Adam B Ulam, *The Unfinished Revolution*, New York, 1960, p 193.

<sup>6</sup> V G Kiernan, "Farewells to Empire: Some Recent Studies of Imperialism", *The Socialist Register*, 1964, p 269.

<sup>7</sup> V Chirol, *India*, London, 1926, p 187.

<sup>8</sup> See J A Gallagher and R E Robinson with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*, London, 1961.

<sup>9</sup> Henri Alleg, in "Perspectives of the National Liberation Movement", *Marxism Today*, Vol 13, No 9, writes in a different context: "The science of Marxism-Leninism is considered as inapplicable to the realities of the third world and with this goes the denial of the existence of class differences within the country and the refusal to analyse the conditions in the third world countries on a class basis." p 258.

<sup>10</sup> J H Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society*. California, 1958, p 6. He writes further: "They were distinguished by many aspects of their behaviour—their deportment, their speech, their dress, their style of housing, their eating habits, their occupations and their associations—and quite as fundamentally by their cultural values and their sense of social propriety."

<sup>11</sup> See T B Bottomore, *Elites in Society*, London, 1964, pp 48-53.

<sup>12</sup> Hamilton to Curzon, October 20, 1899, cited in Anil Seal, *op. cit.*, p 282.

<sup>13</sup> Lewis Namier's outstanding work, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* was a microscopic analysis of the nature of the composition of parliament. Such structural analysis cannot be used for wider and general historical themes.

- <sup>14</sup> Irfan Habib, "Symposium on the Contribution of Indian Historians to the Process of National Integration", *Indian History Congress Proceedings of the Twenty-Fourth Session, Delhi 1961*, Calcutta, 1963, p 352.
- <sup>15</sup> K M Ashraf, *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, New Delhi, Second Edition, 1970, p 107.

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## FROM THE EDITOR

WITH the current number, the *Social Scientist* moves into its second year of publication. The wide-ranging response from readers and contributors alike slowly set at rest the apprehensions initially entertained by many friends about the prospects of a journal like the *Social Scientist*. The number of readers increased with every month that passed. They not only sent in their comments and criticisms but also expressed righteous indignation when an issue was delayed in the press or the post. The contributors kept up a steady flow of their best work. It is this kind of support that moves us to carry on the good work regardless of obstacles and to fulfil some, if not most, of the expectations of the *Social Scientist*.

At a time when the ruling classes, in full control of the mass media, are assiduously bent on monopolising the realm of ideology and culture with pseudo-scientific ideas and 'left' phraseology the *Social Scientist* has tried to present the problems of our society in a scientific socialist perspective.

In helping to support and develop new sources of information, analysis and debate on questions of contemporary practice and theory in the social sciences, we have published contributions from not only recognised experts but also many newcomers, some of them still in the post-graduate departments of the Indian universities. This journal may not appeal to those who write simply for their self-interest or self-promotion, because it does not belong to a group of intellectuals detached from the society in which they live. In fact, it belongs to those who have dedicated themselves to the complete transformation of this society. It belongs to those who, concerned with the socio-economic and cultural problems, seek scientific tools of analysis of these problems and in presenting their analysis resist the conservative, obscurantist and irrational approaches prevalent in the humanities today.

## *Economic and Political Scene, 1972-73*

THE last one year was an eventful year for India in respect of international and internal developments.

In the international sphere, American imperialism was forced to retreat and sign a new agreement on Vietnam. The African people succeeded in intensifying their national liberation struggles, particularly in Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique. The fight against the racist regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia continued with added vigour. Soviet Union, China and all other socialist countries strengthened their economic and military potential, thus providing an effective counteracting force against the aggressive designs of American imperialism. The crisis in the world capitalist system got deepened and the 'Almighty Dollar' was deposed from the pre-eminence it enjoyed in the monetary system of the capitalist world.

The American imperialists are active in the Indian sub-continent. They have armed Pakistan and are now engaged in the most diabolic game of converting Bangladesh into a base for anti-Indian and other nefarious operations. Sikkim is also being used as a new area for their political manoeuvres.

The critical economic situation in India marked by widespread drought and famine, skyrocketing prices and the general inflationary situation, increasing poverty and unemployment, is being taken advantage of by American imperialism as an opportunity for mounting economic and political pressures on the Government of India.

Against the backdrop of the projected foreign aid needs of Rs 3000 crores for the Fifth Five Year Plan, the United States Government is reported to be exerting political pressures to ensure a shift in India's external and domestic policies in favour of the United States. The protracted negotiations on rescheduling of debts and on the disposal of accumulated PL-480 counterpart funds to the order of Rs 2600 crores are pointers to the impending dangers.

The economic situation in the country worsened during the last year, accentuating all the contradictions in the industrial and agricultural sectors. Poverty and misery of the vast majority of the urban and rural poor have been intensified to unimaginable proportions. Starvation deaths of human beings, large-scale perishing of cattle, paltry rations and grossly inadequate relief measures which do not even touch the fringe of the problem—all these have made it possibly the worst year in the post-Independence era.

### *Price Spiral*

The failure of crops, despite the grandiose 'crash programmes' for agricultural production and the so-called green revolution, and the utter callousness and lack of will on the part of the government to pro-

cure the available marketable surplus of foodgrains, faulty distribution system and the uninterrupted operation of blackmarketeers and greedy traders supported by the cheerful expansion of black money, have sent food prices skyrocketing. Whithin the last one year the official index of wholesale prices, despite its gross underestimation (the index is indeed a fraud on the people) registered a rise of 21.5 per cent, raising the index to 240.8 during the week ending June 30, 1973.

Government spokesmen have made pathetic attempts to explain away the massive inflationary spiral by describing it as a 'global phenomenon' or 'passing phase' or something that was caused by extraneous circumstances such as Bangladesh liberation, Indo-Pakistan war and so on.

It is increasingly clear, however, that the staggering problem of price rise cannot be diagnosed without examining the basic elements in the economic system and the dynamics of its functioning. The wrong economic policies pursued by the government resulting in decline in industrial growth rates, substantial unutilised capacity, imbalances created by the so-called green revolution, mounting burdens of an inequitous tax policy, deficit financing, wasteful public expenditure, growth of monopolies, increasing foreign collaborations in even non-essential commodities, high-handed operations of hoarders, speculators and blackmarketeers, inefficiency of the public distribution system and the black money economy operating alongside the open economy, are some of the deeper causes for this malady.

### *Food Debacle*

'Takeover' of wholesale trade in wheat and the oft-repeated assertions about intensifying the procurement effort notwithstanding, the total procurement of the rabi crop, mostly wheat, will be far below 5 million tonnes out of the targeted 8.1 million tonnes. This compares with the 5.6 million tonnes procured last year. Three-fourths of the target are to be met from the northern states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. Except in Punjab, procurement is lagging behind miserably. In a spell of breast-beating and self-criticism, it has been admitted that not many Congress landlords and rich peasants have sold their crop to the government agencies. A rich bonanza of Rs 150 crores spent on the emergency rabi programme, and the bonuses and incentives that fattened the rural rich did neither help the production of food nor its procurement.

Wherever hungry mobs have raided foodgrains shops, they have invariably found grain, not necessarily in small quantities. A hungry population, empty fair price shops and large stocks of hoarded grain with private traders have co-existed in the lean year of 1972-73. The traders are the very people who offered to procure more than the government can dream of—seven to ten million tonnes—of course at high procurement prices of Rs 76 to Rs 85 per quintal. The government which appeared

inclined to accept the offer has on second thoughts preferred to distribute its bounty among state politicians, who after all know the benefactors of the ruling party better. The Chief Ministers' Conference accepted the Food and Agriculture Ministry's proposals for payment of a bonus to state governments for procuring wheat and for higher support price for rice.

The landlords and rich peasants are determined to extract the maximum advantage from the takeover. Government's threat to import wheat at the international prices at a time of world shortages played into their hands; their bids soared. For making quick money while the country starved, the landlords and rich peasants have colluded with the trading interests. In spite of this, the government's agricultural strategy still is directed at pampering the landlords. The Congress Working Committee recommended that investment in agriculture should be directly related to the enhanced procurement targets of the Central pool. So the emphasis is on boosting production for the market with the investment effort primarily concentrated on those who are doing this job, namely the landlord class. They are already marketing it through new informal channels of the traders who have successfully adjusted themselves to the new situation.

The threat to import has now lost its sting. Concerned with the problems of arranging for adequate imports, if only to feed the metropolitan and major urban centres, there is frantic rush for supplies from the United States and Canada. In states like Kerala and Maharashtra, the per capita foodgrain quota distributed through the fair price shops has been progressively reduced and supply has not been enough even to meet the reduced quotas.

It is now clear that by reimposing greater restrictions on inter-state movements, introducing greater compulsion by way of a producer levy on holdings above a certain size, and unloading of its buffer stocks with better control on the chosen outlets, government could have avoided the severe shortfalls in its purchases and the diversion of its foodgrain issues to private stocks of traders.

### *Power Shortage*

The past year witnessed an electricity power crisis of unprecedented magnitude. It still continues unabated. Various studies and reports show that the country has incurred huge losses in terms of industrial and agricultural production. A countrywide phenomenon, only Assam, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir provided the few exceptions—electricity cuts ranged from 15 per cent in West Bengal to 75 per cent in Tamil Nadu.

Industrial and agricultural activity stood crippled for months on end. In the organised sector alone the loss is estimated to be around Rs 20 crores per month. Production stood paralysed in Tamil Nadu recording a fall of 60 per cent, that is, of the order of Rs 300 crores in

the organised and unorganised sectors combined. In the agricultural sector in particular, in the severe drought, pumping for irrigation was held up. Punjab farmers are estimated to have incurred a total loss of around Rs 105 crores.

The monsoons furnish a very poor scapegoat. What really aggravated the power scarcity beyond manageable proportions were unrealistic and faulty planning, chronic shortage of fuel, poor maintenance of power plants and the failure to utilise existing capacity of thermal plants coupled with delays in commissioning the new ones.

It is true that total investment in power supply increased from Rs 190 crores in 1950 to Rs 3500 crores in 1969. Though this constituted a relatively sizeable proportion of the total plan outlay, the concomitant achievement in physical terms has been simply appalling. The shortfall in output in terms of the targets set was 20 per cent in the First Plan followed by 36, 35, 38 and 34 per cent respectively in the subsequent four Plans. The irony of it all is that while planning continued for additional generating capacity, less investment was devoted to transmission network. The result has been losses in transmission and distribution which range between 18 and 35 per cent against a permissible maximum of 10 per cent.

Operational and maintenance problems resulting in under-utilisation of installed capacity have not made matters any the better. Non-availability of power generating plants from indigenous sources in time, poor quality of coal supplied to thermal stations and coal transport snags have all contributed to the power shortage.

### *Sagging Industrial Production*

Serious shortages in crucial products such as steel, coal, cement and fertiliser, rising prices and continuous difficulties in the supply of essential raw materials and shut-down of public sector industrial plants reversed the mild uptrend in industrial output noticed last year. In the last quarter of 1972-73, according to an estimate, it was two to three per cent less than that in the corresponding fourth quarter of 1971-72. While the ordinary consumers get the worst of it in terms of supplies and prices, the lack of proper distribution machinery has facilitated the cornering of stocks by blackmarketeers and speculators who have reaped perhaps the best profit margins since the Second World War.

In the case of fertilisers, a part of the real reason for fertiliser scarcity may be sought in the rigidities of the distribution system. Instances have been noted when, at least for a short duration, fertiliser stocks under the central quota meant for areas no more in urgent need of fertilisers due to drought conditions, piled up with factories while other areas which could profitably use the fertilisers went without them. Instead of stepping up domestic production on the basis of real self-reliance and creating an effective distribution system, the government is going in for collaboration agreements with Japanese monopoly companies.

Similarly, cement is in short supply, and cement prices have shot up to fantastic heights. Despite the so-called price control, the prices of cement in the blackmarket have gone up to Rs 35 per bag. And what is the government doing? They have no machinery for proper distribution of cement. They sit as silent spectators, permitting the blackmarketeers to reap the benefits while ordinary consumers suffer.

There is substantial unutilised capacity in the organised sector of the industry. The majority of public sector enterprises are still showing huge losses due to bureaucratic bungling and the policy of the government to utilise the public sector in the interest of the owners of private property, particularly the larger industrial houses. The monopoly houses have been cheerfully expanding their production capacities, aided and abetted by public sector financial institutions such as LIC, FCI, IDBI, ICICI and a host of other agencies. The small scale sector has been neglected by the government and left in the open to be lynched by the overwhelming competitive power of the monopolies and their aggressive marketing operations. The traditional industries such as coir, cashew, bidi and handlooms are today facing the worst crisis since independence.

The handlooms sector is languishing under the callous policies pursued by the Congress government. There is acute shortage of yarn the price of which has skyrocketed. Lakhs of handloom weavers have been thrown out of their traditional occupation due to the non-availability of yarn. At the same time yarn has accumulated at the producing mills and are not being lifted because the state governments have no machinery for distribution.

### *Unemployment*

The spectre of unemployment haunts the youth of the nation and millions in the upper age-groups of the working population. In March this year urban registered unemployment stood at 7.3 million of which 3.5 million were the 'educated unemployed'. Of the tens of millions of unemployed in the rural areas (the Bhagwati Committee made a gross underestimate of 16.1 million) some were employed in crash programmes during 1972-73. Paying a pittance for a full day's toil the government is aiming at diverting the anger of the wretched from breaking out into struggles and militant action. Here again, the contractors, bureaucrats and the landlord classes, more than anybody else, are the beneficiaries of the crash programmes which have been described sometimes as 'relief works for the rich'.

### *Labour Policy*

A policy of virtual 'wage freeze' which is being implemented has resulted in a fall in the real wages of the working people. Instead of bridging the gap between the rich and the poor which the government professes to do, this labour policy leads to widening of the gap as any freeze measure will only help the employers—the big monopoly bour-

geoisie and the landlords—to accumulate wealth at the expense of the poor. The policy of 'moratorium' on strikes has in effect meant the use of brutal force to suppress the workers' demands and deny collective bargaining. The labour policy of the government thus reflects the very core of the capitalist economy.

Wherever the people have unleashed struggles against the wrong economic policies of the government, the coercive instruments of the state have been employed in the most inhuman manner. The government has applied draconian measures such as Defence of India Rules (DIR) and the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) to meet protesting marchers and demonstrators. Under MISA alone, more than 10,000 persons have been put behind the bar. The challenge of the rising tide of mass struggles is proposed to be met by the intensive use of the repressive machinery of the army and police. The expenditure on the Central Reserve Police has reportedly gone up steadily, from Rs 5.76 crores in 1965-66 to Rs 37.85 crores in the last year.

### *Growing Struggles and Emerging Unity*

Last year, particularly the last few months, witnessed an unprecedented rise of mass protests all over the country. Forms of protest have varied from token strikes to dharna, squatting, demonstrations, indefinite strikes and 'bandhs'. Workers in important industries such as jute, engineering, textiles, railways, road transport and electricity undertakings have conducted militant struggles during the last one year. Agricultural labour and land-hungry peasants have gone into militant action for distribution of surplus land, very often taking the destiny into their own hands and distributing illegally held surplus lands of landlords. Middle class employees, central government and state government employees, teachers, students youth and women, all have entered the arena of struggles in a big way.

The experience of the mass struggles during the last year points towards the urgent need for unity of the working class and a wider unity between workers and peasants and also the middle classes. There are already visible signs of this emerging unity. It is reflected in the forging of links among different trade unions and political parties which have gone into joint action on issues affecting the vast masses of the people, whether it be the defence of the trade union rights of the working class, 'bonus for all', 'need-based wage' including full neutralisation of cost of living or the mass resistance to blackmarketing and hoarding of food materials. The participation of increasing sections of the people in such struggles in defiance of lathis, teargas shells and bullets unmistakably reveal the growing urge for unity and united actions.

It is heartening to note that the cause of peasants has received support from workers, and the demands of the unemployed persons have been backed by employed workers and teachers, students and youth. The struggles of vast sections of the people, organised or sporadic,

unmistakably reveal the prevailing discontent and anger with the Congress Party and the Congress-run central and state governments. The Congress governments in particular, have chosen repression as the means of meeting people's agitation and struggle, as is clear from the indiscriminate use of DIR and MISA as mentioned earlier, and their attempt to divert attention by deliberately prompting and promoting chauvinistic, regional and separatist tendencies in many parts of the country and by acting as a silent spectator of the rising incidence of communal violence.

The year 1973, thus, will be recorded in the history of India as the year in which the bankrupt capitalist-landlord policies of the ruling party, masquerading under the slogan of 'Garibi Hatao' and 'Indira Socialism' were completely exposed. The so-called New Wave which was mystified in public image through aggressive advertising, (financed by Goenkas and other monopoly houses, high-level operators of black money, traders and landlords) and publicity through the All India Radio and the monopoly press, has now given way to the rising wave of discontent of the people against the Congress government led by Indira Gandhi.

Within a short span of 15 months, President's Rule under Article 356 of the Constitution has been proclaimed in Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. No doubt, the law and order situation in the wake of the separatist 'Mulki Rules' agitation in Andhra Pradesh and the revolt of the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) in Uttar Pradesh were the excuses recorded in the reports of the Governors to the President of India justifying the imposition of President's rule; but it was clear from the political events preceding the proclamation of President's Rule that the real causes were the sickening corruption in political and administrative circles, the in-fights within the faction-ridden Congress Party and the inability of the central leadership of the Congress to impose even the rudimentary forms of party discipline on their own followers. About 28 per cent of the Indian population, or about 15.38 crores of people out of a total population of 54.79 crores are today subjected to President's Rule. The will of the people as expressed in the legislatures and control of the elected representatives on the administration of the states have thus been negated.

The deteriorating economic situation has its parallel in the perpetual-in-fights in the state governments for control of the purse strings. The rising mass resistance is attempted to be met by a one-party one-person dictatorship through the repressive machinery of the police and bureaucracy. It is heartening to note, however, that a sense of unity is developing among the left parties and particularly in the trade union movement led by them. The task is to develop a viable left and democratic front capable of channelising the discontent of the people in an effective manner.

HIREN GOHAIN

### *Origins of the Assamese Middle Class*

IT is important for Marxists in India to study the origin and development of the various regional sections of the Indian bourgeoisie (using the word in a broad sense) for a proper assessment of their rôle in the Indian revolution. Their unity and conflict with the big bourgeoisie ought to be properly understood. The example of the Assamese middle class might be instructive for several reasons. First of all, it is of comparatively recent origin, trailing at least a hundred years behind its powerful Bengali counterpart. Secondly, it betrays the connection between the strength of traditional culture and the weakness of productive forces it commands, in a way illuminating for the whole of India. Thirdly, having had to defend its interests in competition with 'outsiders' who possess greater financial resources and more advanced skill in an economy stunted by imperialism, it has developed chauvinist tendencies that continually deflect its legitimate aspirations. Its landed property is no counter-weight to the enormous pull of big capital in the economy of the State, and contradictions, between its historical rôle as the junior partner of an exploiting force controlling the entire Indian economy and the growing impatience of the big bourgeoisie with separate regional interests, have sharpened. The romance with the big

bourgeoisie has threatened to degenerate into a stark marriage of convenience.

Of course there are dangers in discussing the Assamese middle class in general. There has been considerable change in the composition and economic role of this middle class since independence. There are hundreds of miles of metalled roads in the districts that help carry the trader to the interiormost village. Schools and colleges have mushroomed, and are overcrowded. There are some industries in the public sector with scores of Assamese technicians and executives where there was virtually none. It has not only bagged the majority of well-paid posts in the new and expanded bureaucracy, but it now has a greater degree of access to and control over the financial resources of the State than it used to have.

By a process of a simple plunder from the State treasury in the name of 'development programme', the Assamese middle class has noticeably become more affluent and ambitious. But it does not hold the key to the further development of the region and the people there mainly because of its necessarily subservient relation to the Indian big capital. Vital economic and social reforms—land reform, planned industrialisation, exploitation of the hydro-electric potential of the region, fighting the insidious power of the monopolies—are being neglected by this class in its intoxication with easy money and nervousness about losing its privileges. However, the challenge of the objective situation is confrontation with the monopolies and the Central Government to which it otherwise looks for the protection of its interests. The decisive battle with the monopolies will be waged by the broad masses of workers and peasants of India. The Assamese middle class can expect to bring about the needed transformation of the economy and society of this region only if it takes its place on the side of the toiling masses.

A consideration of the historical evolution of this middle class accounts for some of its salient characteristics. For one thing, in spite of half-hearted and superficial attempts at modernisation, in fields like education, there is a profound inertia that cannot be overcome. The Assamese middle class is now a helpless witness of the ruthless march of big capital rather than the advance guard of capitalism. Its base is so narrow that it cannot hope to transform the productive forces in agriculture. At the same time it has been alarmed at the growing demand of the poor peasants for land. The rapid increase in the number of the educated unemployed has also shaken it badly.

The reaction to it has assumed the form of acute xenophobia. There has been a revival of old fears of domination by outsiders. At the same time the synthetic culture of Bombay films seems to sweep all before it, and turn the yearning for the culture of the past into a pipe-dream. The only way out of this dead end would be a renunciation of privilege, for which it is not prepared. Behind the frantic scramble for money and status symbols one discerns suppressed fears. Behind the apparent lack of

interest in politics, one feels deep distrust of leftist politics. This does not rule out eruption of pent-up frustration in acts of desperate and short-winded extremism. As in the national freedom movement, Assam will be a little late in joining the struggle against bourgeois-landlord rule, with the middle class acting as a buffer between radical ideas and the working masses. But not for long. Meanwhile, revolutionary parties must exert their pressure by spreading Marxist ideas and building up cadres in the teeth of raging reactionary conspiracy to lure away the youth of this region. The initial impetus must again come from outside and must attract middle class elements who do not jump into the Congress bandwagon.

British occupation of Assam (including the strategic hill areas) was complete by 1840. At first there was some ambiguity in British declaration of policy regarding Assam, and illusions on that score persisted among the natives down to the eighteen-fifties. As late as 1849, F Jenkins, in his comprehensive report on the revenue administration of Assam, refers to the hopes among certain sections of the native population about eventual restoration of the province to its former ruling house.<sup>1</sup> But the British had in the first half of the nineteenth century embarked on a course of annexation to which this province could hardly be an exception. Force and fraud were used to acquire the territories of Oudh, the Punjab, Jhansi, Nagpur and Satara. Those states that were allowed to retain nominal independence for sometime languished under "the double incubus of their native administration and the tributes and inordinate military establishments imposed upon them by the company".<sup>2</sup>

It is this that finally discredited the temporarily restored rule of Purander Singha in upper Assam and provided an excuse for complete British takeover. In fact the British had collected exhaustive information on the wealth and commerce of Assam much earlier. A succession of British military officers and trade agents like George Bogle, White and Jenkins, had broadly hinted in their reports to the headquarters of East India Company that occupation of Assam would ensure control not only over the internal trade of Assam but also over her fairly large trade with Burma, Tibet and Bhutan.<sup>3</sup> Captain R B Pemberton in his report of 1835 observed,

Looking to the extraordinary fertility of the soil . . . and the proofs derived from history, of its former affluence, abundant population and varied products, there can be no doubt that in the course of a few years, under a more settled government than it has possessed for the last century, this province will prove a highly valuable acquisition to the British government. Its revenue already shows progressive improvement, and as our communications are renewed with the numerous tribes surrounding it . . . new channels of commerce will be obtained.<sup>4</sup>

A fateful discovery made at this juncture completely decided the issue for the British. Tea plants were found growing in a wild state in

the foothills of upper Assam. A contemporary Assamese chronicler clearly accuses the British of removing from the throne the last Ahom king in order to turn his country into a vast tea garden.<sup>5</sup>

However, the local feudal nobility was scarcely in a position to rescue the people of this region from the consequences of feudal decay. When the British entered Assam, the country had been laid waste by invading Burmese hordes. Thousands had fled from the reign of terror unleashed by the Burmese and taken refuge in neighbouring regions like Bengal, Arakan and even Tibet. In the hundred years before that collapse a series of peasant uprisings of increasing gravity had already undermined the foundations of the Ahom system of bureaucratic-feudal exploitation. But the rebellion had a religious colouring, and sought to restore the simplicity and freedom of pre-feudal relations, a solution that led to a blind alley. Even so, the peasants in revolt had refused to submit to serf exploitation and forced labour in fields, rude workshops and public works, thus fatally injuring the economy and the military might of the Ahom system.

The British found spacious areas, formerly densely populated, desolate and overgrown with jungles, sweeping embankments and roads fallen into ruins, the various handicrafts in utter decay, and population decimated to less than two million. In his report A J Moffat Mills quotes from the memorandum of an Assamese gentleman expressing the relief and gratitude of the new native elite at the return of law and order, and the benefits of British rule. Ananda Ram Dhekial Phukan, one of the early leaders of this new elite, had written,

No greater benefit could accrue to the people of this country than the deliverance from the Burmese invaders whose barbarous and inhuman policy depopulated the country and destroyed more than half the population, which had already been thinned by intestine commotions and repeated civil wars.<sup>6</sup>

Thus the new middle class offered hearty support to the British, and the peasantry too, at this stage, accepted British rule.

The new middle class was not formed from the ranks of the former nobility. The advantages of British education and the new avenues of employment and trade were cornered by caste Hindus who had served the former rulers as their clerks and bureaucrats. The situation is strongly reminiscent of the decline of the Muslim nobility in the rest of India. What seems to have struck the Ahom feudal nobles a deadly blow was the abolition of chattel slavery and the widespread system of forced labour that supported them. The British did grant meagre pensions to as many of them as they could, but the rot could not be stopped. British officers were often moved at the plight of the proud and taciturn aristocrats who could not manage their own estates and fell into dire poverty, and who refused to serve under the British. As late as 1909 the *Imperial Gazetteer of India* remarked:

The native gentry were, however, impoverished by the abolition of

the offices they had formerly enjoyed and by the liberation of their slaves, and they had some grounds for feeling discontented with the British rule.<sup>7</sup>

When at the beginning of the twentieth century the Ahoms demanded a share of the jobs and other opportunities that went to the caste Hindu elite, the British were quick to pit them against the established middle class.

But it will be an exaggeration to say that the British fostered the growth of the middle class without restriction. In fact anything that disturbed the tenor of their colonial exploitation was destroyed. At this point it is useful to recall the meteoric rise and fall of Mani Ram Dewan, an outstanding, if somewhat unscrupulous, Assamese gentleman who developed from a loyal friend and enthusiastic supporter of the British into a mortal enemy. Mani Ram in his memorandum to Mills had hailed the abolition of forced labour and restoration of law and order as the beginning of a new era of prosperity and well-being for the people of Assam. But he also listed the shortcomings of the British administrators. In a personal petition to the Company he recalled the considerable help he had given to the Company by acting as the guide of the British forces, by mustering labour and building roads in difficult and inaccessible terrain, by supplying British forces with provisions for five years, by helping the administration realise a very much larger sum as land revenue than the British were able to do on their own, and so on. Then he recounted how shabbily he had been rewarded for his faithful service.

The Dewan, in fact, had served as the *dewan* of the first private tea garden in Assam, the famous Assam Company. The British proprietors and managers paid glowing tributes to his loyalty, outstanding ability, organising ability, organising skill and acumen. C A Bruce, discoverer of tea, called him 'indispensable'.<sup>8</sup> But Mani Ram was too independent and spirited to pull on as an underling with other British officers, and he started his own garden. To the amazement of the British, Mani Ram's garden was successful while their venture flopped. Then suddenly the revenue assessment on his estate was increased manifold, and he was deprived of a few lucrative *mauzas* (*tehsils*) at a stroke. This naturally earned Mani Ram's undying hatred. In 1857 he was found plotting the overthrow of the British in collusion with a prince of the former ruling house and was executed. Holroyd, the British magistrate, exemplified the vindictive British attitude by declaring: "Hanging first, trial afterwards."<sup>9</sup> Preparations for the uprising were crushed with the help of native police officers, and for decades people recalled the way of persecution and terror that descended on the suspected families.<sup>10</sup> The Assamese middle class learnt its lesson too well, and were chary of expressing antagonism to the British until the days of non-co-operation.

The attitude of the new middle class is better typified by Mani Ram's illustrious contemporary, Ananda Ram Dhekial Phukan who belonged to an enterprising family founded by a wandering monk from

South India in the late eighteenth century. This *Sanyasi* gained the confidence of the powerful Prime Minister and earned a huge fortune as the controller and customs-farmer of the important Assam-Bengal trade, which principally used the river route. Ananda Ram went to Calcutta for higher education in 1841 mainly at the instance of British officers in charge of the administration of Assam. On his return he joined government service at Rs 120 a month, a fairly large sum in those days, and rose to be a Sub-Assistant Commissioner, drawing Rs 250 a month and often in charge of the entire district. Ananda Ram was deeply concerned at the plight of his countrymen, and was inspired by the example of Peter the Great to work for progress and enlightenment of his society. He invoked the ideals of science, advocated the spread of modern education, liberation from superstitions, and expansion of commerce and communications. He yearningly compared the beneficial effects of British civilisation and modern education in Bengal with the stagnation in Assam. A *Few Remarks on the Assamese Language* written by him affirmed the separate identity of the Assamese language against the expansionist claims of new Bengali chauvinism, and thus became a historic document in the middle class Assamese nationalism.

But in all this he presumed close collaboration with the British authorities. When he was promoted to the then important post of Sub-Assistant Commissioner, the British officer who had advised and helped him to study in Calcutta reminded him in a congratulatory note of his obligations to his benefactors. A J Moffat Mills, deputed by the Company to prepare a comprehensive report on the administration of Assam, was irritated by Mani Ram Dewan's memorandum where he discerned disaffection. But he was favourably impressed by the very different tone of Ananda Ram's memorandum and by the schemes of improvement outlined by him. When the 1857 revolt sent its ripples towards Assam, Ananda Ram made anxious efforts to prove his spotless loyalty to the nervous British rulers.<sup>11</sup>

The same line of collaboration with the British was advocated by another distinguished member of the new middle class in the following decade, though he was a man of very different temperament. Hem Chandra Barua had begun his career at an early age as apprentice writer in the courts at a pittance of Rs 4 per month, but taught himself English in the teeth of opposition from orthodox guardians, and by sheer ability worked his way up to a fairly respectable position. He was a man of proved integrity and independent enough to reject offers of prestigious and well-paid posts from the government. He had hearty contempt for the decayed feudal bonds and taboos. He derided the hypocrisy and ignorance of traditional religion in scathing language and freely criticised individual British officers in his writings. His proclaimed atheism and unorthodox ways so outraged his contemporaries that in spite of the respect he inspired, people hesitated to cremate his body in the traditional Hindu manner. He edited one of the earliest English newspapers in

Assam, *Assam News* (1882); which had a circulation of about 900. Hem Chandra Barua wrote the first scientific dictionary of the Assamese language, tracing the Sanskrit or local roots of words and framed the principles of orthography which are still followed. His opinions on various subjects like social manners and traditions of Assam; tenancy rights and opium addiction were invited by the colonial government. However, even this robust and rugged personality was not opposed in principle to British rule which he considered an agent of progress and enlightenment.<sup>12</sup>

The complex of ideas is strongly reminiscent of the ideology and culture of the Bengali *bhadralok* (elite), risen from the ranks of caste Hindus rather than the older nobility, receiving Western education developed for them by Lord Macaulay who aimed thus to secure the support of a section of the population,<sup>13</sup> hostile to old superstitions but still attached to traditional mores, attracted to nationalist visions deeply devoted to the cultivation of vernacular literature, but ultimately limited in their opposition to the British by their vested interest in landed property as established by British rule and in jobs made available by the administration.<sup>14</sup>

Bankim Chandra, graduate of the newly founded Calcutta University, and the first major novelist in any Indian language, expressed profound admiration for the robust independence and self-reliance of the British personality, which he contrasted with feudal servility.<sup>15</sup> He was also in favour, on balance, of continuance of British rule in India for an indefinite period—a sentiment familiar among many of the stalwarts of the new Assamese middle class.<sup>16</sup> However extreme the hostility of a section of this *bhadralok* to English rule, nationalism remained for decades a purely middle class phenomenon, inspiring the grand orator and the individual hero rather than mass resistance, and thus destined to be politically sterile.<sup>17</sup>

In Assam this analysis is interestingly confirmed by lack of middle class interest in a series of peasant rebellions against exorbitant land revenue (which the British would enhance at the slightest pretext while mouthing pious philanthropy) imposed on a society where money circulation was still slow and insignificant.<sup>18</sup> The new middle class was nowhere near the scene when the peasants took to arms. The sporadic and unco-ordinated uprisings were quickly put down. The first Assamese newsmagazine, *Orinodoi*, launched by the American Baptist Mission Press in 1846, and quite popular with the new middle class, drew lessons for its audience from these abortive rebellions. It poured scorn on the ignorant and poorly-armed 'rabble', underlined their recklessness, and re-affirmed the stupendous might of the British empire.<sup>19</sup> Contemporary middle class references condemn British land revenue policy, since the middle class shared similar burdens in the new land tenure system introduced by the British in Assam, but do not express approval of the militant phase of the struggle.<sup>20</sup>

The Assamese middle class was even more of a product of British administration than its Bengali cousin. There is enough evidence to prove that the East India Company set about destroying in a systematic fashion all serious competition in the field of trade and commerce, conceding the right of existence only to those who agreed to serve as agents of their monopoly.<sup>21</sup> But that was not necessary in Assam, in as much as commerce and commodity-production had not attained in Assam the heights of prosperity that they did in Gujarat and Bengal. There was no trading class, a phenomenon the British noted in their early administrative reports and official surveys.<sup>22</sup> Commodity-production was in its infancy, most of the necessities including oil and cloth being produced by people at home. The feudal aristocracy had used forced labour to produce surplus food and luxury articles for their use.<sup>23</sup> Even so, there was a lucrative trade between Assam and Bengal and Assam and Tibet, the latter bringing annually gold worth a hundred thousand rupees to the king's treasury.<sup>24</sup> But such trade was completely under the control of the crown. Hence there is no question of a prosperous class of banyas patronising the new culture. There was no native capitalist in Assam; the artisan was independent and he supplemented his income with the products of a farm he worked regularly.<sup>25</sup> This explains the commercial monopoly of the Marwari merchants who followed the British into Assam and diligently tapped the few opportunities for money-making opened by the British, like moneylending, supplying provisions to tea gardens, procuring mustard and later jute for the market outside Assam and meeting the demand for new household implements and articles, cheap and mass-produced, that the Assamese soon came to adopt.<sup>26</sup>

The insufficient growth of the market also accounted for the primitive nature of roads and communications. Colonel Hopkinson wrote in 1861 :

With the furious current of the Brahmaputra, still unconquered by steam, opposing a barrier to all access from without, and not a single road fit for wheeled carriage, or even passable at all for a great portion of the year, there is such an absence of the full tide of life running through Assam, such a want of intercourse between man and man, as does and must result in apathy, stagnation, and torpidity, and a terrible sense of isolation, by which enterprise is chilled, and capital and adventurers scared away.<sup>27</sup>

By 1886 there were 172.8 kilometres of railway linking interior areas with the Brahmaputra, the great artery of trade.<sup>28</sup> Steamers first began to ply from Dibrugarh to Calcutta in 1853, and a daily service of mail steamers was introduced in 1884.<sup>29</sup> It was mainly due to the development of tea industry and trade that the government was compelled to improve communications somewhat. The fact that the Assamese middle class had little connection with trade and the consequent triumph of traders from outside, has something to do with the lack of enterprise, the irregular habits of work, and the lack of calculating rationality in the

make-up of the Assamese middle class mind.

The new Assamese middle class could scarcely hope to match the material resources of the Calcutta gentry, whose leaders waxed fat on the dividends from comprador transactions and on revenue from permanently settled estates. Lakshmi Nath Bezbarua, a leading spokesman of Assamese nationalism in the first decades of this century openly regretted that the British had not bestowed on the Assamese gentry the benefits of Permanent Settlement! Prince Dwarakanath Tagore, Rabindranath's grandfather, paid the Company an annual sum of Rs 10 lakhs at a time when the total revenue of Assam was less than that figure!<sup>30</sup> With trade and commerce in the hands of merchants from outside, the Assamese middle class had only two sources of income—service in a government department or tea garden, and *mauzadari*, or agency for collection of land revenue in the countryside.<sup>31</sup> Both are evidently parasitic jobs requiring only a modicum of enterprise and productive skill.

The *mauzadar* was appointed to a particular circle of villages by the British authorities on a hereditary basis, thus ensuring loyalty and continuity of feudal influence in a different set-up.<sup>32</sup> While the *raiya-wari* settlement might seem more benevolent than *zamindari*, frequent enhancement of land revenue prevented the accumulation of even moderate wealth in all but a few fortunate families. Since the *mauzadar* was required to be both a man of substance and an educated man skilled in accounts, the appointments were usually cornered by well-born and rich families from the ranks of caste Hindus. But there was obviously a limit to the increase in the number of such commissions. In the matter of government service and clerical jobs in tea gardens too there was stiff competition from Bengali graduates and matriculates. As early as 1850 one hears complaints of favouritism and discrimination on the part of certain British officers in favour of Bengali candidates.<sup>33</sup> The amalgamation of Sylhet, an integral part of Bengal, with Assam, also drove ambitious and well-trained Bengali youths to crowd the government offices to the chagrin of the newly-educated Assamese middle class elite.<sup>34</sup>

As Broomfield points out in his *Elite Conflict in a Pluralistic Society*, in the first decades of this century the Bengali middle class had already produced a big surplus of educated youths who could not hope to be employed in the generally narrow provincial administrative set-up. They sought their fortunes in neighbouring states of Orissa, Bihar and Assam, where their assertion of cultural superiority exacerbated local resentment at their success in finding jobs.<sup>35</sup> The Assamese were somewhat luckier with tea garden jobs, but on the whole the growth in employment opportunities did not keep pace with growth in literacy and education in the entire region of Eastern India. In Assam, for instance, the 1891 census shows 1,338 persons as 'public scribes and copyists', 100 persons as doctors, and 73,664 persons as beggars.<sup>36</sup> A fairly large part of all these figures came from Sylhet. In 1905 in the prosperous Sibsagar district there were only 3 S D Cs, 15 police sub-inspectors, 6 government

dispensaries, 10 *Kanongohs*, of whom presumably many were not Assamese. In the 52 post offices and 13 post primary schools the majority of the employees were Bengalis. Educated unemployment became a serious problem before the Second World War, cushioned only by the joint family and landed property that the middle class owned.<sup>37</sup> The introduction of private rights in land by the British naturally introduced litigation and courts. The Assamese middle class also took to the profession of law with enthusiasm. Already in the eighteen-seventies one heard of a law school in Sibsagar, and in 1891 there were 1,263 lawyers, including barristers, in Sibsagar district.<sup>38</sup>

While the British kept the opening for middle class careers deliberately narrow, they did little to develop in this area opportunities for higher education. There were very few colleges. As late as 1930 there was only one full-fledged college offering courses in science, and accommodating only 30 students in the Intermediate Science class. There were no professional or technical institutions of a higher grade except one law college and a polytechnic school. Many a meritorious student had to abandon the hope of higher education if he could not afford the expenses of education in Calcutta. The first college was almost the fulfilment of a dream.<sup>39</sup> Gauhati University was founded as the result of a movement that went hand in hand with the freedom movement in the forties. Assam became a separate province in 1874. She had her first university 75 years later. The British authorities fought this legitimate demand to the end.<sup>40</sup> This is yet another proof that the Assamese had to fight for every inch of ground gained as a modern, self-conscious nationality, a detail relevant for studying its present chauvinism. In the matter of education the higher castes had an advantage from the beginning while the majority of the population suffered from neglect. In 1911 out of a population of 7,059,857 only 333,672 were classified literate. Literacy among the Brahmins was 324 per thousand, among the Kolitas (the next higher caste in Assam) 79 per thousand, and among the Ahoms 61 per thousand, while the Mikirs, one of the many tribes, had only 3 literate persons per thousand.<sup>41</sup> After the First World War this pattern predictably gave rise to communal tensions and strengthened economic communalism.

While the British had little interest, in spite of pious protestations, in the development of this region, they were not tardy in making use of all the opportunities of large-scale colonial exploitation that presented themselves. British managing agencies like James Warren, Andrew Yule and Shaw Wallace moved in and began sending down to Calcutta cartloads of timber and other forest products. But the most important instance is that of the tea industry. The single-crop malady in such colonial economies as that of Ghana and Cuba may be said to have affected Assam also with similar disastrous consequences.<sup>42</sup> There was considerable drain of wealth, and there was also a tendency to divert all savings in that direction. Not only were the gardens largely British-owned but the distribution and marketing of tea were also a British monopoly with

Assamese planters having not the slightest influence in these matters. Thus the Assamese planters, though the most affluent section of the native bourgeoisie, were at the mercy of the imperialist government and the giant British companies backed by all the power of the City of London. While the most prosperous Assamese garden in 1905 had under its control an area of less than 3000 acres, the biggest garden owned by the Assam Company (which owned twelve such gardens) spread over 7881 acres, and the biggest garden owned by Singlo Tea Company had an acreage of 4290 acres. Further, the British gardens had on the average much larger proportions of the total areas under the crop than the Assamese gardens.<sup>43</sup> There is some evidence that the British got loyal Assamese gentlemen interested in setting up as tea planters with a view to ensuring the support of the indigenous population for the industry under their control.

The growth of the tea industry was, however, phenomenal. First discovered in a wild state in 1826, it was experimentally cultivated by the colonial government in the early eighteen-thirties. It began to flourish by 1859, when the Assam Company, a private concern which had nearly 4000 acres under cultivation started producing over 1.6872 million kg of tea per year. The cultivation was soon spread all over upper Assam. By 1872, a total of 27,000 acres (out of 364,990 acres leased for that purpose) was under cultivation, producing 13.32 million kg per year. In 1915 the area under tea in the whole of Assam was 383,821 acres and the production had shot up to 544,756,742 kg per year!<sup>44</sup>

The industry was responsible for the rapid extension of the railway, for gradual extension of production for the market among the local peasantry, and monetisation of the economy. It was calculated that in Sibsagar district alone the tea garden labourers spent a sum of Rs 48 lakhs every year on food and clothing, and thus a considerable part of this sum found its way into the Assamese village.<sup>45</sup> Tea gardens also attracted from outside skilled labourers, unskilled labourers, tradesmen and artisans. The population of the province rose so fast between 1881 and 1891 that with the exception of Bombay and Madras the rate of growth was the highest in India. The cause was immigration rather than natural growth. The number of immigrants rose from 280,710 to 510,672 during that period. Of the total number of immigrants 83 per cent were tea garden labourers.<sup>46</sup> Apart from strict rules of contract which reduced the tea garden worker to a kind of bond slave, the wages were poor, and no wonder that very few climbed into the ranks of the middle class from among the tea garden workers before independence. Tea gardens were allowed to occupy huge stretches of land at a nominal rent by the colonial government. In 1915, the area owned by the gardens was 1,323,619 acres, while only 383,821 acres were under the crop.<sup>47</sup> Assamese planters complained of discrimination in government grant of wasteland, but to no avail.<sup>48</sup> The British planters in upper Assam helped launch and supported one of the most influential newspapers in Assam,

*Times of Assam* (1893), but its fortunes dwindled when it began criticising the tea garden interests and supporting the workers. The last issue came out in September 1947.<sup>49</sup> Tea gardens also arrested the growth of towns by encouraging local fairs in adjoining areas and dispersing traders among the gardens. No wonder even loyalist leaders of the Assamese middle class were rather critical of the role of the tea industry.

Even in 1961 towns accounted for less than 10 per cent of the total population of Assam. In the nineteenth century, due to the preponderance of imperialist methods of exploitation and the insignificance of regional trade and commerce, to say nothing of industry, there were no large towns in existence. The former royal capitals were simply seats of the royal court and military camps. In 1891 the urban population was only 1.8 per cent of the total. In the Assam valley there was only one town with more than 10,000 inhabitants.<sup>50</sup> In 1911 there were three towns in the Assam valley with more than 10,000 inhabitants, but not a single town in the whole of Assam with more than 20,000. There were in all 21 towns among which only 5 had earned the distinction of municipal government.<sup>51</sup> These towns were mostly district and sub-divisional headquarters, where the townspeople were mostly employees of courts, government and municipal offices, post offices and railway station, schools and trade depots. Each town also had a community of traders from outside the province supplying the town with groceries and luxury goods.<sup>52</sup> There was only one industrial town, the oil-town of Digboi with its small refinery, but it had as little impact on the regional economy as most other centres of extractive industry owned by foreign interests. Important towns like Jorhat and Nowgong were badly served by the railway that wound in and out of tea garden areas.

Until recently, most of the towns had close links with the countryside. People who lived in towns generally owned land in the countryside to the extent of, say, between 10 and 20 acres (though there were also a few big landowning families with estates of 300 or 500 acres). Even now at certain seasons of the year bullockcarts trudge into towns laden with spoils from the sharecropper's fields. The author grew up in a town, the biggest in Assam, within half an hour's walk from luxuriant fields of rice. Even now the customary association of towns with trade and industry, din and bustle, alertness and wariness, cunning and craft do not quite go with many an Assamese town. No wonder there is still a powerful hold of rural culture over such towns. Autumn nights still resound with congregational singing of devotional songs. Marriages and ceremonies are performed with a regard for most of the traditional taboos. Modern middle class culture was created and sustained by a handful of people with more-than-average means, and able to afford the luxury of modern education outside the province. What they created eventually mingled with the rural heritage, at once enriching it and depriving it of its edge and point. Even now there is no professional theatre in any of the towns, though there are well-equipped roving

theatrical troupes that tour the countryside in the slack season.

The town was the seat of the *babu*. British influence on Assamese society made itself felt largely through education. The first schools were started in the eighteen-forties by the British officers eager to spread the message.<sup>53</sup> But prejudice against modern education was deep-rooted among the people.<sup>54</sup> The school was despised because it violated traditional taboos, mixed up castes and communities, and disseminated queer ideas. But the elite of the new middle class was quick to discern the advantages of this education for their progeny. Dina Nath Bezbarua, whose death was mourned in a long obituary in *The Englishman* of Calcutta, was at first allergic to English education, but later saw the light and himself took the lead in founding an English school.<sup>55</sup> The benefits of the new school education are touchingly narrated by an anonymous school student in *Orunodoi* (August 1861), where he holds up to scorn the prolific superstitions and taboos of his society and invokes the new education as the infallible means of 'civilisation'. The schools at first did not recognise Assamese as a separate language, and it caused great resentment against Bengali officials, who were supposed to have misled the gullible English! With the creation of Assam as an independent provincial unit in 1874, Assamese was given that recognition, and it soon became the medium of instruction in schools.<sup>56</sup> The odds against which the middle class had to fight were heavy, but the wonder is that they made any progress at all. Most of the stalwarts of this class hailed from obscure villages and some of them had to work their way up from humble circumstances. But the fifth Indian ICS officer, Anundoram Barua (1850-1889), was one of them. During his short life he became known as a man of great probity, earned fame as a distinguished and original Sanskrit scholar, and won the admiring friendship of people like R C Dutta.<sup>57</sup> Other people of superior talent could not find a proper environment in Assam and could not make any lasting contribution.

The history of the Assamese middle class is thus one of tragic deformation under imperialist rule. But as yet there is little awareness of the historic reasons for this stunted growth among the Assamese themselves. There is a tendency to blame immigrants from other provinces which has led to terrible consequences, and the Central Government is not keen to remove such illusions. The lack of economic power combined with the survival of feudal habits of thought has made the Assamese middle class dangerously prone to reactionary thinking. But one is almost certain that the basic reasons for backwardness and stagnation can be removed only in a socialist India. Meanwhile one notices the alarming and threatening form in which capitalist 'progress' confronts the people of Assam, who fret at their lack of control over the course of this 'progress'. The temptation to fall back upon an imaginary past is quite strong. Like other regional bourgeois elements the Assamese middle class has no tradition of critical thought in its heritage. The pull of religion is strong. Lakshmi Nath Bezbarua, the most gifted man in what

may be called 'Assamese Renaissance', struck his deepest note while talking about religion and the place of Assamese language. His writings on the second topic served on the whole a progressive cause. But one is not so sure of the former topic. Bezbarua calmly informs his audience that the way of science and knowledge leads to vain glory and conceit, whereas religious devotion depends on complete extinction of the ego. Bezbarua does not seem to consider that it was Bacon who had accused medieval theology of pride and subjective illusions, of 'conceit' in the etymological sense of the term, or that Newton had compared his great discoveries with a child's picking of pebbles on the sea-shore.<sup>58</sup> In the absence of a real solvent the problem of caste appeared as a mere superstition, capable of being purged by vigorous exhortation. The pioneers of the Assamese middle class culture thought caste an obstacle to national unity, not a hindrance to production, and their attack suffered from contradictions of which they were only dimly aware. While the ideological foundations of caste have collapsed, economic and social inertia still upholds, indeed, strengthens it.

The politics of this middle class had been in the beginning equally unadventurous. The Assam Association, founded in 1903, pressed for liberal reform and practised a politics of persuasion and collaboration. The Assamese leaders were being used cleverly by the British authorities in self-governing local bodies like municipalities and local boards, where for years the British members formed a majority and which in any case was for a long time presided over by the Deputy Commissioner. When the first non-official got elected as the Chairman, there was jubilation.<sup>59</sup> Similarly in the nominated Legislative Council the weight of the colonial interests was all too evident. The British aims in associating the natives with government were quite clear. Through native members they tried to feel the pulse of the people whom they ruled, and introduce modifications and concessions in detail while keeping the basic outlines of colonialist policy unchanged.<sup>60</sup>

Before the First World War, Congress had no influence on the Assamese middle class, but non-co-operation changed the situation and swept Assam into the orbit of the new politics of mass movement. The political conference of the middle class leaders held in Sibsagar in 1919 still harped on jobs for the local boys, extension of facilities for education, development of the language and so forth. Within one year the mood changed drastically. The politics of mass movement and agitation was openly embraced in the meeting of the Assam Association held next year at Tezpur. The Assam unit of All India Congress was soon after formed and non-co-operation spread like wild fire among the people. Even so, the one phase of the movement that stirred the deepest feelings was characteristically linked to the progress of Assamese nationalism. In 1921 the revenue from opium in Assam was Rs 44 lakhs, and there were thousands of addicts among a people demoralised by foreign domination and exploitation.<sup>61</sup> The agitation against it was strong, massive and

sustained, in the face of savage repression by colonial authorities. While the authorities had a foretaste of the power of resurgent masses, the middle class gained political experience and courage. During the Cawnpore session of the Congress two intrepid young delegates from Assam urged that the next session be held in Assam. The session was to be a resounding success in terms of popular enthusiasm. It decisively linked the fate of Assam politics with that of India. But it is ironic and instructive that within a decade some of the organisers began to be more keen and active in a movement to protect Assamese interests against outsiders.

<sup>1</sup> *Report on the Revenue Administration of Assam* to The Board of Revenue, Calcutta, dated Gauhati, November 13, 1849, p 29.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx, "The Native States", *New York Daily Tribune*, July 1, 1953. See also R M Lahiri, *The Annexation of Assam*, Calcutta, pp 165-168.

<sup>3</sup> S K Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, DHASA, Gauhati, 1949, pp 80-81.

<sup>4</sup> Captain R B Pemberton, *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India*, DHASA, Gauhati, reprint 1966, p 76.

<sup>5</sup> Duti Ram Hazarika, *Asamar Padya Buranji*, DHASA, Gauhati, 1932, p 209.

<sup>6</sup> A J Moffat Mills, *Report on the Province of Assam*, Calcutta, 1854.

<sup>7</sup> *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1909, 'Eastern Bengal and Assam', p 571. See also H K Barpujari, *Assam in the Days of the Company*, Gauhati, 1963, p 5 and 10.

<sup>8</sup> C A Bruce, *Report on the Manufacture of Tea*, Calcutta, 1839.

<sup>9</sup> A K Gurney, *Fifty Years' Mission Work in Assam*, quoted in Upendranath Barua, *Indibar Barua*, Jorhat, 1924, pp 16-17. Benudhar Sarma, *Mani Ram Dewan*, Asom Jyoti, N.D.

<sup>10</sup> Upendranath Barua, *op. cit.*, p 16.

<sup>11</sup> Gunabhiram Barua, *Anundaram Dhekial Phukanar Jivan Charitra*, Publication Board, Assam, reprint, 1971. See also Barpujari, *op. cit.*, p 284.

<sup>12</sup> Sarbeswar Sarma Kotoki, *Hem Chandra Barua*, Gauhati, 1927.

<sup>13</sup> For the imperialist aim behind the new education policy, see D C Boulger, *Lord William Bentinck*, Oxford, 1897, pp 156-157; See also J H Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society*, University of California Press, 1968.

<sup>14</sup> J H Broomfield, *op. cit.*, p 18.

<sup>15</sup> Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, *Bibidh Prabandha*, Vol I, "Bharat Barsha Paradhin Keno". The same admiration for the British personality and culture is echoed in the writings of the pioneers of modern Assamese literature. See L N Bezbarua, *Rachanavali*, Sahitya Prakash, Gauhati, Vol I, p 1736 and Kamala Kanta Bhattacharya, *Koh Pantha* (c 1919), p 54.

<sup>16</sup> Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, *Ananda Math*.

<sup>17</sup> Broomfield, *op. cit.*, p 149.

<sup>18</sup> Keshav Narayan Dutta, *Swadhinota Sangramat Asom*, Gauhati, 1958 pp 48-63.

<sup>19</sup> *Orunodoi*, November 1861.

<sup>20</sup> K N Dutta, *op. cit.*, p 69.

<sup>21</sup> R K Mukherjee, *Rise and Fall of the East India Company*, Berlin, 1953, p 174.

<sup>22</sup> B C Allen, *Sibsagar District Gazetteer*, Allahabad, 1906, p 191; W W Hunter, *Statistical Account of Assam*, 1879, p 261. William Robinson, *A Descriptive Account of Assam*, MDCC, XLI, London, p 245.

<sup>23</sup> *Assam Land Revenue Manual*, Shillong, 1917, Introduction by W E Ward, p LX.

<sup>24</sup> Francis Buchanan-Hamilton, *An Account of Assam* (c 1820, Reprint 1963, Gauhati), pp 24 ff.

<sup>25</sup> William Hunter, *op. cit.*, p 261.

- <sup>26</sup> B C Allen, *op. cit.*, p 191; Hunter, *op. cit.*, p 245.
- <sup>27</sup> Quoted in Allen, *Nowgong District Gazetteer*, Calcutta, 1905, p 169.
- <sup>28</sup> Rev P H Moore, "General View of Assam", paper read before the *Jubilee Conference of the American Baptist Mission Union*, 1886, p 10; Allen, *op. cit.*, pp 181-186.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup> Orunodoi, November 1846; *Harakanta Sadaraminar Atmo-jivani*, North Gauhati, 1960, pp 79-80.
- <sup>31</sup> For an account of the *mauzadari* system, see *Assam Land Revenue Manual*, 1917, pp 210 ff. Allen remarks in his *Nowgong District Gazetteer*, p 161: "There are no rich men amongst the Assamese in Nowgong, and very few who are even moderately well-to-do." The Assamese journal *Jonaki* in the September, 1905 issue observes pathetically that the only big men among natives in Assam are the Extra Assistant Commissioners or Deputy Collectors.
- <sup>32</sup> *Assam Land Revenue Manual*.
- <sup>33</sup> *Harakanta Sadaraminar Atmo-jivani*, p 82.
- <sup>34</sup> *Advocate of Assam* complained on November 11, 1904, that not a single educated Assamese had been appointed in Cotton College. Files of vernacular newspapers are rich in such clamour.
- <sup>35</sup> Broomfield, *op. cit.*
- <sup>36</sup> *Census of India*, 1891, Vol I (Assam), Report by E A Gait.
- <sup>37</sup> Allen, *op. cit.* <sup>38</sup> Gait, *op. cit.*
- <sup>39</sup> Haren Kolita, *Gauhati Biswa-bidyalaya Karmi Santhar Mukhapatra*; Vol I, No I, 1963-64. Only 10 candidates appeared in the Arts Degree examination from Assam in 1911, and 7 passed. (*The Census of India*, 1911, Vol III).
- <sup>40</sup> Kolita, *op. cit.*, mentions the report of the D P I, Cunningham, curtly dismissing the demand for a university in Assam.
- <sup>41</sup> *Census of India*, 1911, Vol III, pp 86-87.
- <sup>42</sup> Paul Baran, *Political Economy of Growth*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1960, pp 165 ff, 187 ff.
- <sup>43</sup> *Sibsagar District Gazetteer*. <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>45</sup> Hunter, *op. cit.*, p 263; Allen, *op. cit.*, pp 144-145, p 177. Ward, Introduction, *Assam Land Revenue Manual*, pp xlii-xlvii.
- <sup>46</sup> Gait, *op. cit.*, p 77.
- <sup>47</sup> Ward, *op. cit.*, p xlv.
- <sup>48</sup> Chandra Kumar Agarawala complained in his newspaper, *Asomiya*.
- <sup>49</sup> L N Phukan, *Mahatma Pora Rupkonwaraloi*, Calcutta, 1969, pp 89-103.
- <sup>50</sup> *Census of India* 1891, Vol I, p 58.
- <sup>51</sup> *Census of India* 1911, Vol III, p 9.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 8-10. See also Gait, *op. cit.*, pp 59-60.
- <sup>53</sup> Upendranath Barua, *op. cit.*, p 9. <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* See also Major John Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*, London, 1859, p 239, p 240.
- <sup>55</sup> Bezbarua, *Rachanavali*, Vol II, p 137.
- <sup>56</sup> *Census of India*, 1891, p 157.
- <sup>57</sup> S K Bhuyan, *Anundoram Barua*, Gauhati.
- <sup>58</sup> Bezbarua, *op. cit.*, p 432.
- <sup>59</sup> V V Rao, *A Hundred Years of Local Self-Government in Assam*, Gauhati, 1965, pp 144-164. For British domination in such local bodies see Upendranath Barua, *op. cit.*, p 38.
- <sup>60</sup> K N Dutta, *op. cit.*, p 69.
- <sup>61</sup> *Krishna Sarmar Diary*, Publication Board, Assam, 1972, pp 71 ff. For the important and influential loyalist trend in Assam politics see P D Goswami, *Manick Chandra Barua*, Gauhati, 1971.

*Some Features of the Political Economy  
of Agriculture in a Tamil Village<sup>1</sup>*

PART ONE

A year ago the Indian food crisis was triumphantly declared solved. The drought which has struck large parts of the country this year has dramatically falsified those claims. By now it is obvious to most observers that the 'green revolution' was no revolution at all. The current agricultural policy is a repetition of an old and well-known pattern: it is favourable to the big farmers and to the agro-industry which supplies the modern inputs to them namely, fertilisers, pesticides, tractors and so forth. It is unfavourable to the small farmers and to the tenants who are left out of the 'green revolution', who become impoverished and gradually tend to lose their land. The increased production has not brought a decrease in prices. On the contrary, the continuously spiralling food prices show that the 'green revolution' has not even been favourable to the consumers.<sup>2</sup> These effects are only what can be expected from the agricultural policy of a government which has been rightly characterised as a bourgeois-landlord government.<sup>3</sup> Under the cover of radical phraseology which is designed to attract middle class and working class voters, the government continues to pursue a policy which enriches the ruling classes and which impoverishes the people at large. Or, as more commonly expressed, it is

a policy which makes the rich richer and the poor poorer.<sup>3</sup>

The most pressing political problem in India today is the mobilisation of the working classes in opposition to the bourgeois-landlord government. Only when the working classes gain a true influence over the agricultural and other policies of the government can serious attempts be made to solve the Indian food crisis.

The main Indian working classes are the industrial workers, the agricultural workers, and the small peasants.<sup>4</sup> The progressive groups and, most of all, the Communists are since long engaged in the task of organising the working classes. On the agricultural front the organisational position can be said to be the following :

1) The work has been successful only in limited regions, that is, most of all in West Bengal and Kerala, and in smaller pockets in other states like East Tanjore District in Tamil Nadu or parts of the Telangana region in Andhra Pradesh. Outside these areas the movement has had limited success.

2) Even within its strongholds the movement has been successful mainly among agricultural labourers. This class has been organised in militant trade unions of imposing strength. Among the small peasants, however, the work has met with great difficulties.

The small peasants constitute the largest single member class of the Indian working classes. They alone constitute a majority of the agrarian population. This fact accounts for their crucial political importance. A working class movement which lacks the support of the small peasant class can never gain any political influence in India.

The difficulties met with in trying to mobilise the small peasants are, we believe, to some extent due to a theoretical weakness : a better understanding of their own situation would help in formulating a correct strategy. We hope that with this article we can make a theoretical contribution to the solution of this problem.

### *Thaiyur Panchayat : Co-existence of Wealth and Poverty*

Thaiyur Panchayat belongs to Chingleput District in Tamil Nadu. It is situated some 40 kilometres south of Madras City near the coast of the Bay of Bengal. Thaiyur Panchayat has about 5000 inhabitants and about 1000 households belonging to ten different hamlets.<sup>5</sup> It has a peculiar caste composition, since nearly 90 per cent of the population are Harijans. They belong to the former untouchable caste of *Parayan*. The caste composition is a consequence of the 'dual economy' which is found here : The Panchayat lies near the Kovelam Salt Factory in which a majority of the Harijans get employment for part of the year. The economy is 'dual' in the sense that it is dominated by agriculture during half the year and by salt production during the other half. This 'duality' is, of course, as peculiar as the caste composition. As we will show, one

can, despite all this, draw conclusions from the study of the Thaiyur economy which can be useful also in a more general context.

Most people in Thaiyur are poor. In terms of cash about 50 per cent of the households earns less than 1000 rupees a year.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand 15 per cent earns more than Rs 2000. In other words above 70 per cent of all households can spend less than one rupee per consumer<sup>7</sup> per day. The three richest households in Thaiyur earn about ten per cent of all incomes. Their income is about Rs 50,000 per year. In what follows we shall try to outline a part of the system which produces this co-existence of wealth and poverty. We will present some data from our study of agriculture in Thaiyur Panchayat.

### *Paddy-Growing Village*

The cultivated area in Thaiyur is about 2750 acres out of which about 80 per cent is wet land and 20 per cent is dry. The wet land is irrigated by means of rainwater collected in lakes and tanks during the North East Monsoon in October-November. With normal rainfall of 1000 to 1200 mms per year, this is enough only for one crop in most of the land. Some privileged landowners close to the reservoirs can in special cases get two crops a year. The dry land is dependent upon rainfall only. Groundwater is used only in a small fraction of the land, even though the conditions for tapping groundwater reserves are rather favourable.

Paddy is the dominating crop and covers nearly 90 per cent of the cropped area. Methods of cultivation are almost exclusively 'traditional'. The wooden or iron-tipped plough is the main tool. Bullocks, and to some extent buffaloes, are used as draught animals. Seed varieties are also traditional. Some 'progressive' farmers have tried improved or high-yielding varieties, but with little success. The farmers say that the poor soil of Thaiyur is badly suited to the new varieties. Farmyard manure is complemented with both green manure and chemical fertilisers in low doses. Pesticides are widely used, since crop-pests have become frequent in recent years.

Yields are poor, on an average about 7.5 bags per acre. (Each bag is 72 kgs). Productivity varies little between big and small farmers. This fact is a reflection of standardised methods of cultivation.

### *Producers and Means of Production*

The first and most fundamental fact about Thaiyur agriculture is the distribution of land. Most of the land in Thaiyur is owner-cultivated. Only an approximate ten per cent is cultivated by tenants. In this article, we shall largely leave out the category of tenants and concentrate on the situation of the owner-cultivators. The distribution of landownership is as follows :

TABLE 1  
DISTRIBUTION OF LANDOWNERSHIP IN THAIYUR PANCHAYAT<sup>8</sup>

Owner category	Households		Owned acreage	
	Number	%	Acres	%
Landless <sup>9</sup>	150	15	0	0
Small farmers, <sup>10</sup> owning 0.01 - 2.49 acres	640	64	800	32
Small middle farmers, owning 2.50 - 3.99 acres	63	6	205	8
Big middle farmers, owning 4.00 - 7.99 acres	69	7	414	16
Big farmers, owning 8.00 acres and above	76	8	1081	43
Totals	998	100	2500	99

We first note that the number of landless households is rather low. This is the more so, since the landless category above also includes a number of households not at all involved in agriculture. Landownership, in other words, is fairly widespread in Thaiyur. Despite this fact, the distribution of land is extremely unequal. The small farmers, who form about two-thirds of the entire population, control about one-third of the area, while the big farmers, only eight per cent of the households, control nearly half the area owned. The severe inequality is better highlighted by the following figures: 57 per cent of the households own less than one and a half acre. They control about 17 per cent of the area owned. Seventeen households, less than two per cent of the total, own more than 20 acres each. They control about one-third of the area.

Land is the most important means of production. This is proved by the following facts. No landowner needs to refrain from cultivation due to lack of tools. Likewise to own livestock is not necessary for a farmer. He can hire ploughing coolies to do the work for him and manage quite well without owning any bullocks. But no farmer can manage without land! Land is the only really scarce means of production in agriculture. These facts are reflected in the 'factor prices'. In a sample of nine households representing diverse classes of farmers which we have studied intensively,<sup>11</sup> we found that if they would sell their lands these households would get on an average 4500 rupees. When they bought their tools the mean cost was only Rs 50. Livestock is more costly, priced about Rs 200 per pair. The fact that only four out of nine farmers had their own bullocks shows that these are not indispensable.

### *Farming in Partly Monetised Economy*

Our approach in this paper is the result of a reflected choice between theories, based upon several years of work with these problems.

We have come to the conclusion that conventional economic theory, neo-classical marginalism, is only of limited value in the analysis of the Indian agrarian economy.<sup>12</sup> Our main tool of analysis will be Marxist theory. Conventional economics, however, contributes some insight. Its main object of study is the rationality of individual economic behaviour. Let us start in the same way by analysing the economic behaviour of Thaiyur farmers, and see how far we reach.

Thaiyur farmers act within the framework of an only partly monetised economy. The factors of production are supplied, partly through the market, and partly through other mechanisms. Land, for example, is mostly acquired through inheritance. But there is a market for land, and sometimes peasants are forced to sell their land. Likewise, seeds, fertilisers, manure, and other inputs are supplied partly through the market, and partly produced on their own farm. Seeds are taken from last year's produce, and only seldom bought. Green manure is grown in the fields during the dry season, and ploughed down into the soil at the beginning of cultivation. Manure is produced by the cattle and collected both in the farmyard and in the fields by women or girls. Tools, implements and livestock are the only factors of production which are almost always bought in the market.

In the same way, the labour market provides only about half the labour input. The rest is supplied by family labour. The members of the farmer's household in most cases constitute the core of his labour force. But most often agricultural labourers are hired when team work is called for in ploughing, transplantation, and harvesting.

Finally, the output of grain is only partly marketed. The primary goal of the peasant is to satisfy his own household's need of grain. Only if he gets a surplus over his own consumption needs will he sell it. This implies that, in order to finance their cultivation, the peasants are often dependent upon external sources of income.

A substantial part of the agrarian economic system thus lies outside the market economy. It can still be said to be dominated by the market. As parts of the input come from it, and as parts of the output go to it, the farmer's ability to make both ends meet are in the final analysis dependent upon price developments in the market. The importance of the market is further increased by the fact that there exists a class of big, or capitalist farmers. They get a major part of their inputs from the market, and they sell a major part of their output. They therefore depend upon the market to make a profit.

The Thaiyur market is of course not isolated. It is linked to a district, a national, and an international market. The price developments on this vast market are autonomous processes which are outside local control. In other words, Thaiyur agriculture is dominated by the world capitalist system, even though its economy is only partly monetised, and even though only a part of the agricultural production is organised along capitalist lines.

The partial monetisation proves to be the major methodological obstacle when studying the majority of Thaiyur farmers who are small and middle farmers. The big farmers, like capitalist entrepreneurs, act with the market as a frame of reference, and with a view to making a profit by selling their produce on the market. The major part, both of their input and of their output is converted into cash. Their behaviour can easily be studied in terms of conventional business economics.<sup>13</sup> With small and middle peasants it is different. As many goods and services, in their case, are never converted into cash, we are deprived of the handy scale of measurement which prices provide in a market economy. How to evaluate the cost of production when parts of it have not cost anything in terms of cash? How to evaluate the income when it is consumed in the household? How to compare the 'costs' with the 'income'? How to calculate the 'profitability' of farming?

Some economists have tried to solve this problem simply by imputing market prices to goods and services that never enter the market. This method was followed in the so-called "Studies in Economics of Farm Management" in U P and other states,<sup>14</sup> which have influenced much of later research. The fallacies of this approach can be demonstrated by means of data from Thaiyur. We here again use the sample of nine households referred to above. If market prices are imputed to their expenses in kind, that is, to goods produced on their own farm, and to their family labour, we arrive at the following calculation of the mean 'income' and 'expenditure' for cultivating one acre of paddy in Thaiyur :

TABLE 2  
'PROFITABILITY' OF THAIYUR AGRICULTURE

		<i>Imputed market price in Rs</i>	
1	<i>Mean 'income' per acre</i>		
	Mean per acre yield of paddy, 530 kgs, if sold on the market	295	
	Mean per acre yield of hay, 1.5 cart-load, if sold on the market	60	
	Total 'income'	355	
2	<i>Mean per acre 'expenditure'</i>		
	<i>Cash expenses</i>		
	Wages in cash to hired labour	46	
	Expenses in cash on seeds, fertilisers, etc	69	
	Overhead cash expenses on tools and implements per acre	18	133
	<i>'Expenses' in kind</i>		
	Imputed price of wages in kind to hired labour	42	
	Imputed price of expenses in kind of seeds, fertilisers, etc	27	69
	<i>Expenses of family labour</i>		
	The 'cost' of family labour if it had been hired labour	76	
	Total 'expenditure'	278	
3	<i>Profit</i>		
	'Income' minus 'expenditure'	77	

As the imputed market price of an acre varies from Rs 2000 to Rs 4000, the 'return on capital invested' comes to between 2 and 4 per cent. In the case of big farmers the profitability is somewhat higher because of economies of scale.

If we were to rely upon this method of calculation, we would come to the conclusion that the profitability of Thaiyur agriculture is so low that the small peasants would earn a higher income by selling their land, placing the money in a savings bank account, and by working as wage labourers instead of owner-cultivators. This is also the conclusion of many students of Indian agriculture. Mehta, for example, says :

... the conclusion remains irresistible that economically, farming is an unremunerative occupation for the large bulk of marginal farmers.<sup>15</sup>

In this way arises the myth that small peasant agriculture is unprofitable and that it would be a 'rationalisation' of the agrarian structure to drive the small peasants away from the soil that they cling to with an obstinate but irrational 'love of the soil'. This is a hollow myth which is easy to expose. First of all, the calculation in the table above ignores the fact that the paddy is most often not sold on the market, but consumed in the farmer's household; that the hay is most often consumed by the farmer's bullocks and his other cattle; that the manure is produced by his cattle or collected in the common, but seldom bought; and that the land most often does not represent any invested capital. For the peasant his income is the fruit of the labour on his land, rather than a return on invested capital, be it in land or in other means of production. The calculation further ignores a most fundamental fact, namely, that the cultivation in the majority of cases is not financed by the sale of paddy and hay. Most small farmers refuse to sell any paddy, if they can avoid it. Instead they get the cash needed for financing cultivation from incomes earned in employment. Strictly, this implies that expenditures cannot be subtracted from incomes, because the small farmer generally refuses to subtract anything (except the customary harvest wages) from his income of paddy. It is evident that the way of calculating the 'profitability' of agriculture illustrated in Table 2 represents a gross distortion of reality. It is an example of how the economist, consciously or unconsciously, comes to serve as an apologist of the current policies of the bourgeois-landlord government referred to in the introduction.<sup>16</sup> Table 2, then, is a piece of vulgar economy. Marginalism, however, is more sophisticated than that. With the marginalist concept of 'opportunity cost' and with a simple calculation the vulgar myth can be torn to pieces. Suppose that the average acre referred to in Table 2 is owned by a small farmer, and suppose also that he has no bullocks. To cultivate his acre he would have to make a cash investment of 133 rupees. (Compare Table 2). He would get part of this money by selling his hay (Rs 60). Rs 73 remains which he would get through wage labour. With a daily wage of Rs 2 he needs to work 37 days to earn this amount. Adding to this the 31 days that he works on

his own farm<sup>17</sup> we get the result that he has to work 68 days to earn 395 kgs of paddy. From the total yield of 530 kgs we have then subtracted 135 kgs which he needs to pay wages in kind, mostly harvest wages.<sup>18</sup> But in order to purchase 395 kgs of paddy he would have to pay the retail price and then he would need 240 rupees. To earn that much in employment he would have to work for 120 days. Now he has to work 68 days to earn the same amount of paddy. Does he not make a 'profit' then? Does he not behave rationally when he clings to his soil? Besides the 'profit' he makes from cultivation, he has other quite sensible reasons for resisting eviction: if he sold his land he would not be sure of getting enough employment opportunities to compensate for his loss of income from farming. And, moreover, if he could be sure of employment today, he has no security whatsoever for the future.

Correctly applied to the analysis of individual economic behaviour, a marginalist analysis leads us to the conclusion that small farmers who persist in cultivating their soil can have perfectly rational reasons for doing so. What is new in this conclusion? Evidently there is nothing new in proving that small farmers are as sensible as other human beings and with no general defects in their mental set-up. Evidently we have achieved only an understanding of the economic behaviour of small farmers.

### *Classification of Farmers*

All that we have said so far amounts to a rather devastating criticism of the bourgeois economic approach which treats the farm as a profit-maximising unit of, in principle, the same type as the business enterprise. This ideological approach produces only misunderstandings and contradictions. One comes closer to the peasant's reality if one recognises the fact which Chaianov was among the first to stress<sup>19</sup>: the peasant's concept of 'profit' is not the same as that of the capitalist. *The first goal of the peasant is to satisfy his own and his family's need of grain.* His ability to do that is above all determined by two factors: the size of his family, and second, and more important, the productive capacity of his holding. The factors which determine this capacity are, of course, the type and fertility of the soil and the size of his holding. Here we again return to the fundamental importance of landownership as a constituent variable in this system. Landownership is the most important variable determining:

- 1) the capability of the farmer to cover his own and his family's need of grain;
- 2) his capability to cover his family's other consumption needs by the sale of grain;
- 3) his capability to finance his production by means of the sale of grain;
- 4) his capability to get a profit after having covered his family's consumption needs and after having financed production.

Besides landownership a host of other factors co-determine the farmer's capability to fulfil these needs: the monsoon, the incidence of pests and other threats of crop failure; the markets which determine the costs of seeds, fertilisers, tools, livestock and credit, as well as sales prices for grain and hay. All these are factors outside the farmer's own control. He is, therefore, an eminent example of the human condition: he is a slave under a situation which he cannot control but he is free to use his abilities to make the most out of that situation.

Landownership is thus only a seemingly continuous variable. If you consider the productive capacity of their holdings, not only their area, landowners split into distinct classes. This is another way of saying that the distribution of land determines the relations of production. It is the infrastructure upon which the entire agrarian economy is founded. Compare this with Lenin's famous definition of classes.<sup>20</sup>

Classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, and, consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy.

The differences in productive capacity between different holdings entail different relations to the means of production. Using that capacity as a principle of classification, we get the following four agrarian classes (landless agricultural workers excluded):

- 1) *small farmers* who cannot cover their own need of grain from their production and who consequently are dependent upon additional incomes to cover their consumption needs and to finance their production;
- 2) *small middle farmers* who can cover their need of grain from their produce, but neither their other consumption needs nor the finance of their production by sale of paddy;
- 3) *big middle farmers* who can cover either their consumption or the finance of their production by the sale of paddy, but not both;
- 4) *big, or capitalist farmers* who are independent of external finance and who get a profit which they can spend, either in luxurious consumption, or invest in the improvement or expansion of their farms, or invest in other business, like moneylending or commerce.<sup>21</sup>

We have estimated the transition points between these classes in Table 1. The most important classes are numbers 1 and 4, the former because it covers a majority of the agrarian population, the latter because it covers a large part of the cultivated area. The two middle classes are small, at least in Thaiyur, and they cultivate only a small proportion of the total area.

The distribution of land not only divides the agrarian community into distinct classes, but it also unites them in relations of exploitation. The landless and the small landowners are separated from the means of production and deprived of their means of subsistence. They can acquire the latter only by (1) working as wage labourers for the big farmers, or (2) sharing in lands from them. In this way they regain their means of subsistence, but at such a low level that they are often forced to let themselves get further exploited by moneylenders. As we shall see, usury is a prominent form of exploitation in Thaiyur.

### *Labour Market*

The distribution of land is one of the constituents of the agricultural labour market in Thaiyur. The size of his holding determines the number of days that the farmer can be employed on his own land. A small farmer cannot be fully employed on his own land during the agricultural season. He therefore becomes 'free' to work for others. This is a freedom which covers a constraint: since his land cannot feed his family, he is forced to seek additional incomes. On the other hand, a big farmer can only do a part of the necessary work on his own farm.<sup>22</sup> The availability of a wage labour force is necessary for him to carry through his production. The distribution of land is, in other words, not only an allotment of *land to men* but is also, and this is perhaps more important, an allotment of *men to land*.<sup>23</sup>

Another factor contributes to the constitution of the labour market. It is a technological factor: paddy is 'impossible' to cultivate on a family basis.<sup>24</sup> Some operations require team work. In ploughing, teams of ploughmen co-operate; in transplantation teams of women co-operate; in harvesting mixed teams of men and women co-operate, and so on. As a consequence all farmers must hire labourers in order to carry through production. That is to say that even small farmers hire labourers.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, the agricultural labour force is largely (but far from exclusively) comprised by small farmers. So in reality small farmers hire other small farmers to work for them, and they in turn are themselves hired by other small farmers. One can say that small farmers *exchange labour via the market*. This is of course a convenient form of exchange, since it does not require any reciprocity and accounting as other systems would do.

### *Distribution of Paddy*

We have now laid the basis for the study of the surplus product and its distribution. We cannot, however, make a duplicate of Marx's own analysis in *Capital* and use his formula,  $\text{Value} = \text{Constant capital} + \text{Variable capital} + \text{Surplus value}$ , since an application of that formula requires a completely monetised production. As we have seen, this is not the case in Thaiyur. If we tried to use Marx's formula we would have to assume that all transactions took place in the market, an

approach which we have already criticised. We have to start at another point and study the distribution of the agricultural produce and the surplus product.

We have tried to reconstruct the distribution of the yearly paddy production which comes (seeds subtracted), to about 20,900 bags (each bag contains about 72 kgs). A large part of this produce is appropriated by the exploiting classes. The main mechanism by which this occurs is the unequal distribution of landownership. This is evidenced by the following table :

TABLE 3

NUMBER OF PADDY BAGS SOLD BY DIFFERENT CLASSES OF FARMERS <sup>26</sup>				
no of paddy bags sold	small farmers 0.01-1.99 acres	middle farmers 2.00-5.49 acres	big farmers 5.50 acres +	total
0	213	178	43	434
1 - 14	3	21	28	52
15 and above	0	2	43	45
Total	216	201	114	531

Though the figures used in the table are only approximate, it brings out one reliable result, namely, the strong correlation between size of holding and the number of bags marketed. The marketed surplus is entirely produced by big and middle farmers (and most of all by their hired labourers), because only they have holdings which can produce a surplus over their own consumption requirements. The big farmers alone account for a greater part of the marketed produce. We here get an illustration of how the unequal distribution of land in itself is a major instrument by which the agricultural surplus product is appropriated.

Next in importance among the forms of appropriation is usury. Nearly 80 per cent of all households in Thaiyur are indebted. The mean size of debt (among those indebted) is nearly 700 rupees. Most loans are taken from private moneylenders and pawnbrokers. Only a tiny proportion of all loans are contracted with banks, credit co-operatives and other official institutions. The most common form of interest is one bag of paddy per Rs 100 loan. Sixtysix per cent of all loans have this form of interest. As the price of paddy at the time of our field work varied between 40 and 60 rupees, this amounts to 40-60 per cent annual interest. There is a definite class relation here. Big farmers borrow from official credit institutions at a low rate of interest.<sup>27</sup> Small farmers are not considered creditworthy by these institutions and have to borrow from private moneylenders and pay interest in kind. Thus, this is also a form of appropriation. Unlike the first form treated above which builds upon the exploitation of wage labour mainly by big farmers, this is a way of exploiting the labour of the 'free' producer, of the self-employed farmer and also an exploitation of the wage labour that he employs.

Another form of appropriation is landlordism. Most tenants in Thaiyur cultivate their land on a share crop basis where 50 per cent of

the produce is due to the landlord. This is an exploitation of the labour of the tenants, but, as tenants also employ labourers, it is at the same time an exploitation of wage labour. Commercial capital is also involved in the exploitation of the Thaiyur workers and peasants. As we shall see below, merchants appropriate only a small part of the total agricultural produce. A final form of appropriation is government procurement. In good years the government does not procure any paddy at all in Thaiyur, but restricts itself to procuring in more 'high-yielding' areas like Tanjore district. But in years of food scarcity they come also to Thaiyur. The whole process of procurement seems to be a highly erratic and arbitrary one. We have not managed to find out how much of the paddy is usually procured. In the following analysis we do not take procurement into account.

In Table 4 it can be seen that what is left after the exploiters have got their 'share' is 36 per cent of the produce.<sup>28</sup> Fourteen per cent is harvest wages paid to hired labour. Twentytwo per cent is what remains to be consumed within the farmers' households. The 4600 and odd bags involved here gives an average ration<sup>29</sup> per consumer and family member of 70 kgs of rice. This should be compared with a production of over 280 kgs, and a yearly consumption of foodgrains<sup>30</sup> which, according to a rough approximation, is around 200 kgs. This is not enough to provide a sufficient nutritional standard. But the paradox is that, though most households in Thaiyur own land, they can cover only about a third of their actual consumption needs by means of their own farm produce. They have to buy the rest in the market. As can be seen from Table 4, they are allowed to buy back some of the paddy from the exploiters. A large part of the 6355 bags sold in Thaiyur are sold back to small peasants and agricultural workers who have produced it.<sup>31</sup> To get the money that they need to buy this paddy they have to submit to further exploitation by working as salt-field or agricultural labourers. The part of the produce that is directly appropriated by the exploiting classes is disposed of in two ways: 6355 bags are sold back to the producers in order to extract labour from them; and 5785 bags are sold outside. It leaves the Panchayat and most of it ends up in Madras City. This part of the produce contributes to the feeding of the urban population. In general, we can say that the urban and non-agrarian classes are fed only at the expense of a near-starving peasantry. If the Indian peasantry had had control over their own produce, there would have been a much smaller surplus to be transferred to the non-agrarian sector of the economy. As we have seen, the major instrument by which they are deprived of their produce is the unequal distribution of landownership. We can understand why the vital interest of the State and the ruling classes is not the abolition of rural inequality but its preservation. It is often argued that an egalitarian land reform would lead to a decrease in production. This is probably not true, but it would certainly lead to a reduction of the surplus available for marketing out of the villages. This would give rise to

TABLE 4  
DISTRIBUTION OF PADDY PRODUCED AND INCOME DERIVED IN A NORMAL  
AGRICULTURAL YEAR

	Distribution of net produce		Distribution of income in cash and kind
	quantity (bags)	per cent	
Big farmers : market sales	7920	38	Rs 256,000 (gross)
Moneylenders : interest	3000	14	Rs 180,800
Landlords : share sold in the market	1220		Rs 48,800
Landlords : retained for consumption	1220	12	1220 bags
Labourers : harvest wages	2925	14	2925 bags
Retained by farmers for consumption	4615	22	4615 bags
	20900	100	
Sold in Thaiyur	6355	30	
Sold in outside markets	5785	28	

- NOTES : 1 1100 bags used as seeds have been deducted from gross produce.  
 2 It is assumed that landlords keep 50 per cent of their shares for consumption, the bigger landlords selling whole or part of their shares and the small landowners retaining for household consumption.  
 3 Income generated in the production proper of paddy, mostly in wages, are not included in the incomes accounted for here.  
 4 The big farmers use their gross income to finance production, among other things, for payment of cash wages to hired labour.

the statistical illusion that production had gone down.<sup>32</sup>

It must be emphatically stressed that so far we have studied only the distribution of the product itself. This does not give us a complete picture of the process of distribution. We must also study the circulation of money in the agricultural economy. Under modern capitalist forms the surplus product of paddy is exchanged for cash by the ruling classes of the village, the big farmers, the moneylenders and the landlords. In one sense they are comparable to the old jagirdars and zamindars who got a share in the surplus product in return for collecting it. But the current exploiters get money from the sale of paddy. They use this money in three ways: for consumption, often of luxury articles, for saving, and for investment. Most of the money enters a new process of circulation in which it functions as money capital. The big farmers use their income to finance next year's paddy production. The moneylenders may invest their profit in new loans or in other lines of business. Before we can get a full view of the political economy of agriculture in Thaiyur, we must study this new process of circulation, so that we can see how the money incomes generated from paddy production are distributed.

What is of immediate interest, then, is the circulation of the 2.5 lakhs earned by big farmers from the sale of paddy. According to our estimates about 40 per cent of this sum constitutes their net cash income which is their *profit*.<sup>34</sup> The remaining 60 per cent is used as money-capital to finance next year's production. It is spent so that about a third is received by agricultural labourers in cash wages. They, in turn, spend most of it in the market buying food and other means of subsistence. About two-thirds is received by merchants, co-operatives, and the Panchayat Union as payment for seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and other inputs. This is another link by which Thaiyur agriculture is connected to the wider economic system. Fertilisers and pesticides are manufactured by industries owned by the big bourgeoisie, and often with considerable foreign interest in them. In this way the industrialists get a vital interest in the expanded consumption of fertilisers and pesticides. To the circulation of cash that we have now described should be added another, but similar one, namely, the circulation of the cash spent by small and middle farmers in the finance of their production. Without going into the details of that process, we can go directly to the end result of all this, the distribution of incomes from paddy production, in the next part of this study.

( To be concluded )

<sup>1</sup> A preliminary draft of this article has been criticised by Staf Callewaert, Thomas Forsberg, Bengt Furaker, Joachim Israel, G Kasturi, Mats Lundal, Sven-Axel Mansson, Arne Ousback, and some other colleagues.

<sup>2</sup> For readers of this magazine this analysis of the effects of the 'green revolution' is well known. Western readers are referred to Francine R Frankel, *India's Green Revolution : Economic Gains and Political Costs*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N J, 1971. For a more general analysis of the Congress Government policy, see B T Ranadive, : "Two Decades of Congress Planning", *People's Democracy*, Vol 8, 1972, no, 33; and M J K Thavaraj, "Constraints on Resource Mobilisation in India", *Social Scientist*, Vol I, 1972, no 1, pp 12-29. See also Charles Bettelheim, *India Independent*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1967.

<sup>3</sup> According to the CPI(M) and many other progressive groups, the Congress Government represents above all the interests of the bourgeoisie and the landlords. This analysis is repeatedly verified by studies of the policies of this government which show that the policies tend to favour the landlords and the bourgeoisie, the ruling classes in India.

<sup>4</sup> This cursory class analysis is probably agreeable to most Indian radicals.

<sup>5</sup> The data in this study are drawn from a study made by the authors with the assistance of G Kasturi, M Paramasivam, and K Sundari. The study was made in 1969-70 as a contract work for a Swedish Aid Organisation working in the area. It was financed by the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA). Three field work reports have been prepared so far : Goran Djurfeldt and Staffan Lindberg : *Thaiyur Panchayat : Socio-Economic Studies in a Tamil Village*, Part I, "Introduction and Background" (Mimeo), Lund 1971; Part III, "Health and Medical Practices : Where Medical Technology Fails" (Mimeo), Lund 1971; Part VI, "The Economy of Thaiyur Panchayat", (Manuscript), Lund, 1972.

<sup>6</sup> These figures refer to the year 1966-67 which are the latest complete figures on income that we have. This is mainly due to the severe drought which struck

Thaiyur in 1967, 1968 and 1969.

- <sup>7</sup> Here as elsewhere 'consumer' means 'consumption unit'. These have been defined in the following simplified way :

Age of individual	Counted as
1 - 3 years	1/4 consumption unit
4 - 7 years	1/2 consumption unit
8 - 14 years	3/4 consumption unit
15 - 59 years	1 consumption unit
60 and above	3/4 consumption unit

- <sup>8</sup> The figures in the table are estimates arrived at in a rather complicated manner. See *ibid.*, Part IV, Appendix 1.
- <sup>9</sup> The landless category also includes a number of households not at all engaged in agriculture. The number of agricultural workers is consequently low.
- <sup>10</sup> The classification made here presupposes an analysis which is made only later in the article. See classification of farmers, on p 34.
- <sup>11</sup> As the sample size is so small, the figures given cannot be taken as representative of the whole population. They are used here as illustrations only.
- <sup>12</sup> A main source of inspiration has been the works of Maurice Godelier. See, for example, his *Rationality and Irrationality in Economics*, New Left Books, London 1972.
- <sup>13</sup> Even if the profit-maximisation model is applicable to them, one can still doubt the fruitfulness of such an approach. Cf David Kaplan, *The Formal-substantive Controversy in Economic Anthropology: Reflections on Its Wider Implications*, 1968.
- <sup>14</sup> See *Studies in Economics of Farm Management in UP and Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Bombay, West Bengal and Madras*, issued by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Government of India, New Delhi.
- <sup>15</sup> Udaya Mehta, "The Problems of the Marginal Farmers in Indian Agriculture", in A R Desai, (ed), *Rural Sociology in India*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay 1969, p 341.
- <sup>16</sup> Franklin describes the dominating school of agricultural economics in Punjab University, the projections of which are "rooted in the principle of economic rationalisation, and assumes that as in the United States and Canada, so in India, the average size of the operational holding will gradually expand to coincide with the increase in the minimum power unit now available. They project that with the progressive displacement of bullock power by tractors and other machines Indian farmers will for the first time be able to enjoy the economies of scale that have made agriculture a profitable business enterprise in advanced countries. As for the inefficient cultivators, the small farmers who cannot afford the new technology, ultimately, 'this class will find the gap in return' to investment on large and small farms so great that they will sell their holdings and leave agriculture. Similarly, the tenant class will begin to disappear: specifically, the owner-cum-tenant cultivator who used to rely on leased-in land to create an economic unit of operation will sell his small and scattered holdings as he finds large farmers unwilling to rent land that can be cultivated directly at a higher profit". See Francine R Frankel, *op. cit.*, p 14.
- <sup>17</sup> Here we have made an unrealistic but unimportant simplification. It is not the farmer himself who has to work for 31 days but the members of his family who together must do so.
- <sup>18</sup> We have ignored expenditures in kind of seeds, fertilisers, etc, since they do not cost the farmer anything, neither any work to speak of, nor any indirect cash expense.
- <sup>19</sup> A V Chaianov, "The Socio-Economic Nature of Peasant Farm Economy"; in Sorokin, Zimmerman, and Galpin, *A Systematic Source-Book in Rural Sociology*, The University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1931, pp 144-145.
- <sup>20</sup> V I Lenin, "A Great Beginning", *Collected Works*, Vol 29, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1965, p 421.
- <sup>21</sup> As the reader recognises, this four-class division is no innovation of ours. It has been

used by Lenin and Mao. In India it is used by the CPI(M). See V I Lenin "Preliminary Draft of Thesis on the Agrarian Question", *Collected Works*, Vol 31, *op. cit.*; Mao Tse-tung, "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party", *Selected Works*, Vol II, Foreign Language Press, Peking 1967, pp 323-324 and the booklet sponsored by the CPI(M), *A Collection on the Agrarian Question*, National Book Agency (Private) Ltd, Calcutta.

<sup>22</sup> Most of those whom we have classified as big farmers participate in the work on their farms. There is only a small category of 'gentlemen farmers' in Thaiyur.

<sup>23</sup> As Marx has shown, the capitalist mode of production presupposes a separation of the labourers from the means of production. It presupposes a property-less labourer and a property-owning capitalist; see *Capital*, Vol I, especially Chapter 24. We learn how an unequal distribution of land can fulfil the same function of separating the farmer from the means of production, that is, the land. At the same time, as Table 1 shows, the separation is by no means complete. The labourers can be allowed to own small parcels of land. Cf Karl Kautsky, *Die Agrarfrage*, Stuttgart 1899, pp 164-174. It is a common pattern in many labour-intensive types of capitalist agriculture. See Rodolfo Stavenhagen, *Les Classes Sociales dan les Societes Agraires*, Sociologie et Tiers Monde, Edition Anthropos, Paris, 1969.

<sup>24</sup> It is more a cultural impossibility than a technical one.

<sup>25</sup> This is a unique feature which seems to be rare in other countries. Marxist treatment of the political economy of agriculture does not deal with this phenomenon. Neither Kautsky, nor Lenin, nor Mao Tse-tung had the need to discuss it in their analyses. See Kautsky, *op. cit.*; V I Lenin, "Capitalism in Agriculture," *Collected Works*, Vol 4; and Mao Tse-tung, *op. cit.*, pp 305-334. Marxists discussing the Indian situation have not reckoned enough with this fact. Instead they have tended to almost automatically apply the analyses of the authors mentioned. These analyses need to be modified on certain points. Failure to do this can have serious political consequences.

<sup>26</sup> Due to technical reasons we have not been able to use the same classification of farmers here as in Table 1.

<sup>27</sup> Sometimes this cheap money is used for usury.

<sup>28</sup> The methods by which this table has been arrived at are highly complex. Unfortunately, the available space does not allow us to account for them. The interested (or critical) reader is referred to Djurfeldt-Lindberg, *op. cit.*, section 8.3.6.

<sup>29</sup> This is the average ration. The 4615 bags are in reality Unequally distributed: big and middle farmers can their whole need of rice, 200 kgs per consumption unit; in the small peasant households the income in kind becomes much lower than 70 kgs per consumption unit.

<sup>30</sup> Only a minority of all households eat rice the whole year through. When people have to buy foodgrains, they are often forced to buy ragi, because it is cheaper.

<sup>31</sup> The remaining part is sold to the non-agrarian part of the population.

<sup>32</sup> We have not been able to detect any difference in per acre yields between big and small farmers in Thaiyur. In India as a whole, as Gupta has shown, the per acre yields are, if anything, higher on smaller farms than on big ones. So far the 'green revolution' has probably not changed this pattern. See S C Gupta, "Some Aspects of Indian Agriculture" (as revealed in recent studies), in A R Desai, *Rural Sociology in India*, Fourth revised edition, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1969, pp 291-327.

<sup>33</sup> We here leave out what happens to the incomes of moneylenders and landlords. The circulation of that money does not belong to the simple reproduction of agricultural production.

<sup>34</sup> Their income in kind (paddy) is included in the 4615 bags which constitute the farmers' income in kind in Table 4.

ASIM CHAUDHURI

## *'Anti-Monopoly' Policy at Work*

I must further add, that no programme is worthy of the acceptance of the working classes that stops short of the abolition of private property in the means of production. Any other programme is misleading and dishonest; it has two faces to it.

—William Morris, *Monopoly : or How Labour is Robbed*

TWO slender volumes<sup>1</sup> have recently come out summarising the experience of the Government of India in its first ever attempt to control and regulate concentration of economic power and monopolistic and restrictive trade practices through legal means. The publication of these two annual reports, we think, have provided us with an occasion for a scrutiny and discussion of the role that the Indian Monopolies Commission has played during the last one year and more of its existence in its allotted territory. And this alone can tell us what may be expected of the said Commission in future.

The Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act (MRTP Act) was passed in Parliament in December 1969 and was brought into force in June 1970. Under the provisions of the Act the Government established the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission with a chairman and two members in August 1970. The Commission has the status of an independent judicial body whose chairman has the rank of a judge of a high court or the Supreme Court. The preamble of the MRTP Act describes itself as

an act to provide that the operation of the economic system does not result in concentration of economic power

to common detriment, for the control of monopolies, for the control of monopolistic and restrictive trade practices and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

The Act has three substantive parts, namely, Chapter III relating to concentration of economic power, Chapter IV relating to Monopolistic Trade Practices and Chapter V and VI both relating to Restrictive Trade Agreements and Control of Restrictive Trade Practices. The main provisions of the Act are summarised in the Annexure.

The MRTP Act has three main objectives :

1) control of such concentration of economic power as would be detrimental to the public interest by the regulation of substantive expansion, setting up of new units, mergers, take-overs and appointments to directorships;

2) control of monopolistic practices of dominant undertakings or oligopolistic undertakings; and

3) control of restrictive trade practices operated by two or more firms through restrictive trading arrangements. Of these, so far the Act has been administered primarily for the purpose of controlling concentration.

The Government has claimed, using the usual rhetoric, that within the short period that the Act has been in operation, there has been a new orientation in the thinking of those concerned with the operation, control or regulation of the economic and industrial activities of the country... and the *monopoly angle* has become one of the important considerations which weigh with the administrative ministries and other functionaries before decisions are taken in the economic and industrial field.<sup>2</sup>

The claim is examined here in the light of the actual working of the Monopolies Commission.

Much of the Commission's role obviously depends upon what the Government wants it to be. There is nothing in the law which makes it obligatory upon the Government to seek the advice of the Commission or to accept it. The discretion of referring or not a particular case to the Commission lies entirely with the Government. It appears that the bureaucrats and politicians would not share with an independent body like the MRTP Commission the very important power of economic decision-making. This is revealed in the creation of an inter-ministerial Advisory Committee on the pattern of the Licensing Committee in order to consider the applications under Sections 21 and 22 of Chapter III of the Act dealing with expansion of existing undertakings and establishment of new undertakings. The main function of this Advisory Committee is to advise whether any application should be referred to the MRTP Commission for inquiry and report or whether it should be recommended for approval or rejection without reference to the monopolies body. *The criteria that the Advisory Committee should follow before taking this crucial decision is nowhere mentioned if one does not accept the phrase*

*'monopoly angle' as a meaningful criterion.* Hence one may say that in the absence of any clearly laid down criterion in this respect there is nothing to prevent political exigencies rather than rational considerations to determine the decisions.

It is clear from the above that the real power in respect of control over monopolies and concentration is enjoyed by the politicians and bureaucrats rather than the statutory MRTP Commission. The Advisory Committee looks like another Licensing Committee. Maybe, both have common members. The amount of discretionary power enjoyed by the two are the same. Hence, if past experience with licensing be any guide, there is every possibility that this Advisory Committee will also be used by the big and the powerful for their own benefit while the MRTP Commission continues to exist as an ineffective body having nothing to do on its own. That the process has already started will be clear from the facts presented in Table 1.

The table shows that during the period June 1970 to December 1971, out of a total of 151 proposals for substantial expansion, setting up of new units, mergers and takeovers for which the Government's sanction was required and sought under the MRTP Act, the Government had referred only 22 (or 15 per cent) to the MRTP Commission for investigation and advice. Of the 59 cases of appointment to directorships for which the Government's approval was necessary under Section 25 of the Act, not a single case was referred to the MRTP Commission. Even the figure of 22 cases is illusory. For out of those, at least a dozen were so trivial from the viewpoint of concentration that there was no need to seek the Commission's advice. It is symbolic of the importance that the Government attaches to this body. On the other hand, out of the 129 proposals which were not referred to the Commission, at least two dozen had significant implications for concentration of economic power and public interest. The facts thus point to the conclusion that the MRTP Commission and the MRTP Act which created it, are viewed by the Government as nothing but political expedients that are meant to add to its radical image only.

The function of making enquiries into Restrictive Trade Practices as defined in Section 2(0) of the MRTP Act has been assigned to the MRTP Commission under Section 37 of the Act. The first report of the working of the MRTP Act gives the following facts in this regard. Upto December 1971, a total of 8590 agreements were filed. Out of these, particulars of 7050 agreements were entered into the register maintained by the Registrar of Restrictive Trade Agreements who, upto the same period, also examined 1100 of such agreements. Only *one* general agreement covering 8 companies of the tyre industry was referred to the Commission under Section 10(a) (iii) by the Registrar during the period. Four complaints received by the Commission in regard to restrictive trade practices were referred to the Director of Investigation for preliminary investigation.

TABLE I  
PROPOSALS REFERRED TO THE MRTP COMMISSION UPTO DECEMBER 31, 1971

Type of proposal	No. of appli- cations received.	No. withdrawn or found to be exempted.	Net appli- cations,	No referred to the MRTPC,	No. of cases decided by the Govt. on its own.	No. of cases pending With Govt. With but not referred to the MRTPC	8
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1 Substantial expansion of existing undertakings (Section 21)	157	50	107	16	44	47	11
2 New undertakings (Section 22)	33	10	23	4	5	14	3
3 i) Mergers and amalga- mations [Section 23.2]	14	3	11	2	9	-	-
ii) Takeovers and acquisitions [Section 23.4, (8)]	16	6	10	-	5	5	-
Total	220	69	151	22	63	66	14
4 Appointment to directorships (Section 25)	71	12	59	-	57	2	-

Source : *The First Report on the Working and Administration of MRTP Act, 1969.*

The report mentions that the Registrar made direct negotiations with the concerned parties in 'appropriate cases' for removing the objectionable terms and conditions of the agreements instead of bringing these to the MRTP Commission. The ground for resorting to such a practice has been given in the report as 'avoiding formal proceedings under Section 37 of the Act which are bound to be time consuming'. This amounts to bypassing the MRTP Commission in a matter over which it has jurisdiction by a person who is supposed to act as the prosecutor in the Commission. This leaves scope to the Government for extending its influence over the Registrar. Indeed, as A N Oza has aptly pointed out, ... it is like the police prosecutor negotiating with a trader charged with adulteration instead of bringing him before the court.<sup>3</sup> It has made the denigration of the monopolies body complete.

Justice Nain of the Bombay High Court has now been appointed as chairman of the MRTP Commission which remained without a chairman since the first incumbent to the post, Justice A Alagiriswami joined the Supreme Court in October 1972. Press reports indicated that neither of the two judges who were sounded for the post earlier was willing to accept it. The reason for refusal reportedly given by one of them is the proposed bifurcation of the Commission into a Court of Restrictive Trade Practices and a Monopolies Commission charged with preventing concentration of economic power. With only two members in office the Commission dragged on its futile existence, while the reports it submitted to the Government on the few cases referred to it have been carefully hidden from the public view. Hence it is not possible to assess from what angle the Commission viewed its task of preventing concentration of economic power.

The Government has been pursuing a penny-wise policy in providing the requisite staff to the Monopolies Commission. Of the 18 posts of research staff created in the Commission, it was able to fill only 7 by the end of 1971 'by taking officers on deputation from other Government departments'. This is because the 'recruitment rules of the Commission have not been finalised so far'. As a result, the Commission has not been able to start any research work on its own including collection of statistics. Nor has it been able, due to the non-availability of the required staff, to start any *suo moto* work which it is empowered to undertake. To give an example, in the case of Century Spinning referred to the Commission, the majority did not go into the question of interconnection because of inadequate staff for investigations and research.

But paucity of staff should not be viewed as the only reason for inadequate or no investigation work done by the Commission in respect of the cases referred to it. In the case of TELCO, the majority reluctantly agreed to investigate the question of interconnections. Yet, strangely, enough, when the investigation was half way through, it decided to leave the matter there and even stopped Dr Paranjape, a member, from using

the machinery of the Commission to complete the investigation. It also did not agree to call the representatives of TISCO for the hearing to enable the Commission to find out interconnection between TISCO and TELCO. The ground for stopping the investigation was given as that it would be a time-consuming process and would not serve any useful purpose.<sup>4</sup>

The dismal record of the commission and the cavalier treatment meted out to it by the Government are, nevertheless, only to be expected. This becomes obvious if we look back at the basic thinking which moulded this piece of hotly debated legislation. It is to be found in the following four recommendations of the Monopolies Inquiry Commission of 1964 :

- a) *We need not strike at the concentration of economic power as such* but should do so only when it becomes a menace to the best production (in quality and quantity) or to fair distribution;
- b) to accomplish this a constant watch must be kept by a body independent of the Government, in addition to what is being done by Government and Parliament that *big business does not misuse its power*;
- c) the monopolistic conditions in any industrial sphere are to be discouraged *if this can be done without injury to the interest of the general public*;
- d) the monopolistic and restrictive trade practices must be curbed *except when they conduce to the common good* (Report, p 159, Emphasis added).

The above recommendations are based on a philosophy whose basic tenets may be summed up as follows : concentration of economic power *per se* is not undesirable. Only its abuse is bad. Big business is not an evil. It can stay; only a misuse of its power is to be checked. Monopolies may contribute to the public interest and monopolistic and restrictive trade practices are capable of promoting common good. It is idle to expect from a Government wedded to this philosophy, called 'socialism' in current parlance, any positive or concrete action in the direction of curbing monopolies or checking concentration of economic power. In spite of much radical talk, the Government's commitments to some such philosophy have been proven by the content of the MRTP Act and the manner of its execution if not anything else.

History has taught us that

if Government has ever been at pains to curb its excesses or silence its importunities, business has met every check with a dozen subterfuges. In such encounters no Government can hope to forestall business, because 'effective policy' can only be formulated after the event. Hence, business interests, when they cannot expect to be able to rely upon Government because it is their creature or devoted patron, can generally count upon long delays before their latest restrictive practices are stopped or at any rate checked.<sup>5</sup>

From this we can infer what may happen in a country like ours.

where in the eyes of the Government and many intellectuals, monopolistic enterprises have acquired a colouring of respectability from the convincing air of success which the latter have about them. These people find it hard to believe that big business did not make an indispensable contribution to the story of material progress. The Monopolies Inquiry Commission gratefully acknowledged that,

what little development there is owes much to the adventure and skill of a few men who have in the process, succeeded in becoming 'big business', thus concentrating in their hands a great portion of the economic power controlling and directing the production and distribution and of national wealth and income. It is fair also to state that after concentrating power in their hands these men have gone on often to push forward development of further industries, which has been to the advantage of the country (Report, p 136).

In such a society, clearly, no legislation can really harm monopoly or big business. This is because, as has been shown above, even if an anti-monopoly law of whatever worth is passed, it is never enforced rigorously, thanks to the private understanding between the makers of the law and those against whom it is apparently aimed.

#### ANNEXURE

##### *Main Provisions of the MRTP Act 1969*

It should be noted very clearly at the outset that there has been no attempt in the Act to define and delineate the main ingredients of the concept of concentration of economic power. The Act lays down, with a view to checking the emergence of concentration of economic power to the common detriment, that "dominant undertakings" or any other undertakings the total value of whose assets, taken singly or together with the assets of its interconnected concerns, exceed twenty crores of rupees, shall not substantially expand their activities by the issue of fresh capital, installation of new machinery or any other manner unless the proposals have been initially approved by the Central Government (Section 21, 1.a).

A substantial expansion of activities for the purpose of this Act will be deemed to have taken place if there is a 25 per cent increase in the value of the assets of the firm or if the volume of goods and services produced, supplied or distributed, by it increased by 25 per cent after such expansion.

A "dominant undertaking" has been defined in the Act, Section 2d(i), as an undertaking which either by itself or along with interconnected undertakings produces, supplies, distributes or otherwise controls not less than *one third* of the total goods and services in its line of business that are produced, supplied or distributed in India or any substantial part of India in terms of their value, cost, price, quantity, capacity or the number of workers employed. In determining the question whether an

undertaking is or is not a "dominant undertaking" regard shall be had to :

a) the lowest production made or services rendered by the undertaking concerned during the relevant year, and

b) the figures published by the Central Government, (DGTD/CSO), with regard to the total production made or services rendered in India or any substantial part thereof during the relevant year.

Two undertakings will be deemed to be interconnected for the purposes of the Act under the following conditions :

a) one owns or controls the other ;

b) the undertakings are owned by firms, if such firms have common partners;

c) the undertakings are owned by bodies corporate, if one is a subsidiary of the other or they are under same management within the meaning of Section 370 of the Indian Companies Act, 1956, or if one exercises control over the other in any other manner. (Section 2. g).

### *Establishment of New Undertakings*

Under the Act (Section 22) no person or authority other than the Government at the Centre shall establish a new undertaking without obtaining the prior permission of the Central Government if after establishment such undertaking would either be a dominant undertaking or the total value of its own assets, or together with the assets of concerns to which it may be interconnected, would come upto twenty crores of rupees.

### *Merger Amalgamation and Takeover*

Section 23 of the Act requires that any proposal of merger or amalgamation of one undertaking(s) into another, which may result in the creation of a dominant undertaking or an interconnected group of undertakings having assets worth Rupees twenty crores or more, must be cleared by the Central Government before it is sanctioned by any Court or recognised for any purpose. Any proposal for takeover of one firm by another which may have similar results as above, would also require permission of the Central Government before its execution (Sections 23.2, 23.4, 8 ).

In each of the three cases listed above, permission of the Central Government will be accorded only after they are satisfied that the implementation of the proposals will not lead to concentration of economic power to the common detriment or is not likely to be prejudicial to public interest in any other manner. Section 28 of the Act provides a set of guidelines for this purpose. The Act also prohibits any modification in any scheme for substantive expansion, establishing a new undertaking or merger, amalgamation and so forth, after it has been approved by the Central Government without obtaining its prior permission.

### *Appointment of Directors*

In order to prevent individuals and business groups from extending

their control or influence by getting themselves or their nominees appointed as directors in other independent undertakings, the Act confers powers upon the Central Government to regulate the appointment of directors under certain conditions. Section 25 of the Act lays down that no person who is director of a dominant undertaking shall be appointed as a director of any other undertaking except with the prior approval of the Central Government and any appointment contrary to the provisions of this Section shall be void. Approval of the Central Government for appointment of a person as a director of another undertaking should not be necessary unless such person holds office as a director in more than ten interconnected undertakings.

### *Investigation of Monopolistic Trade Practices*

Section 31 of the Act empowers the Central Government to refer to the MRTP Commission for inquiry and report if the Government is satisfied that any or more monopolistic undertakings are indulging in any "monopolistic trade practice" or that monopolistic trade practices prevail in respect of any goods or service. If after making such an inquiry the Commission is of the opinion, having regard to the economic conditions prevailing in the country and other relevant matters, that the practices operate and may be expected to operate against the public interest, the Central Government may pass orders to remedy or prevent any mischief which may result from such practices.

"Monopolistic Trade Practice" has been defined in the Act (Section 2.i) as a practice which has or is likely to have the effect of

1) maintaining prices at an unreasonable level by limiting, reducing or otherwise controlling the production, supply or distribution of goods of any description or the supply of any service or in any other manner;

2) unreasonably preventing or lessening competition in the production, supply or distribution of any goods or in the supply of any service;

3) limiting technical development or capital investment to the common detriment or allowing the quality of any goods produced, supplied or distributed, or any service rendered in India to deteriorate. Section 32 of the Act sets out the circumstances as to when monopolistic trade practices are deemed to be prejudicial to public interest. These are : an unreasonable rise in the prices of goods sold, profits derived from the production, supply or distribution of goods and services, undue reduction in competition in the market, deterioration in the quantity of goods and services, and unreasonable limitation on the supply of goods to the consumers.

### *Registrable Agreements*

Section 33 provides for compulsory registration of any agreement relating to a restrictive trade practice falling within the ten categories

listed in this Section (clauses a to j). These include exclusive dealing arrangements, minimum sale price maintenance agreements, re-sale price maintenance agreements, 'tie-up' agreements, exclusive sole distributorship agreements, or any agreement for exclusion of any person from any trade association, etc. The Act also provides for the appointment of a Registrar of Restrictive Trade Agreements for maintaining a register of agreements subject to registration (Section 34).

Under the provisions of Section 35 of the Act the Central Government notified December 1, 1970 as the appointed day on and from which every agreement falling within clauses (a) to (j) should be registered.

### *Investigation and Control of Restrictive Trade Practices*

Section 37 of the Act empowers the Commission to inquire into any restrictive trade practice registered or not, which may come before it for inquiry. If, after making the inquiry, the Commission is of the opinion that the practice is prejudicial to the public interest, it may direct that (a) the practice shall be discontinued and shall not be repeated or (b) the agreement should be modified suitably to remove the offending restrictive trade practices. The essence of the law relating to restrictive trade practices is to prevent injury to the public. Section 38 lists the circumstances in which a restrictive trade practice should be considered prejudicial to the public interest.

### *Procedure for Inquiry*

Section 10 of the Act provides that the Commission can, besides acting on the basis of its own knowledge and information, enquire into any restrictive trade practice :

1) upon receiving facts which constitute such practice from any trade or consumer's association having a membership of not less than twentyfive persons or from twentyfive or more consumers; or

2) upon a reference made to it by the Central Government or a State Government, or

3) upon an application made to it by the Registrar.

It can also enquire into any monopolistic trade practice upon a reference made to it by the Central Government or upon its own knowledge or information.

Anti-monopoly legislations throughout the capitalist world are aimed at either of the following two goals. One is not to allow the emergence of any monopoly position or concentration of economic power within the economy and the other, to check the possible abuses of monopoly power in the interest of the people and not to strike at its very root. The first view on monopoly may be characterised as the *per se approach* and the second as the *abuse approach*.

As an example of the *per se approach* to monopoly we have the anti-monopoly legislation in the U S A. According to the Sherman Act

of 1890, the first anti-trust law, the main objective of anti-monopoly legislation in the U S A was

to perpetuate and preserve for its *own sake* and in spite of possible cost, an organisation of industry in small units which can effectively compete with each other.<sup>6</sup>

The British Monopolies, and Restrictive Trade Practices (Inquiry and Control) Act of 1948 was based upon the *abuse approach*. The Indian MRTP Act of 1969 is modelled on the British Act. This becomes clear from the basic frame of this Act as given by the Monopolies Inquiry Commission of 1964 noted earlier.

We have noted above that the Indian Act has not tried to define the contents of the phrase "concentration of economic power". This creates a fundamental difficulty in administering this part of the Act. A N Oza observes :

as the intention behind the law is not to control concentration *per se* but to control it only to the extent that its effects are or are likely to be detrimental to the public interest, some rudimentary information and analysis of the economic effects of concentration of economic power are absolutely essential.<sup>7</sup>

This, however, is not the only lacuna in the legislation, there are quite a few others. For example, the definition of "interconnected undertaking" given in the Act is vague and difficult to apply for operational purposes. With the definition of "interconnected undertakings" in its present form the MRTP Commission is stated to be facing difficulty in establishing interconnections of the firms with any of the large industrial houses and is seeking detailed information for the purpose. The counsel for Birlas had, in May last year while arguing on behalf of Orient Paper, challenged the summons issued by the Commission to call for information intended to establish interconnection among the 10 Birla companies. The Commission's inquiry into interconnections among the 10 Birla companies is now at a standstill as a sequel to the stay orders passed by the High Courts in Calcutta and Delhi with respect to further proceedings in pursuance of the summons issued by the Commission. It may be noted here that the Dutt Committee has listed 203 concerns as connected with the House of Birlas and the Commission was trying to carry investigations with respect to only 10 of them! The government has promised an amendment to the MRTP Act to remove these difficulties.

The guidelines provided in Section 28 of the Act for judging any proposal from dominant undertakings from the point of view of the inevitable "public interest" are as usual vague and have not much operational significance. These are nothing but a list of ideals which economic policy is supposed to strive for in a mixed economy and might have served as a preamble to any industrial legislation.

- <sup>1</sup> *Annual Administrative Report on the Working of the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission, August 1970 - December 31, 1971*, New Delhi, 1972, pp 16, and *The First Report on the Working and Administration of the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act*, 1969, Department of Company Affairs, Government of India, 1972, pp 35.
- <sup>2</sup> *The First Report on the Working and Administration of the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act*, 1969, *op. cit.*, pp 1-2.
- <sup>3</sup> A N Oza, "Futility of the Monopolies Commission", *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 6, 1973, Vol III, no 1, p 23.
- <sup>4</sup> F L Berarwalla, *Industrial Licensing, Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Law and Practice*, Bombay, p 124.
- <sup>5</sup> A R Bridbury, *Historians and Open Society*, London, 1972, p 100.
- <sup>6</sup> Cited in Walter Adams (ed), *The Structure of American Industry*, (3rd Edition), New York 1965, p 533.
- <sup>7</sup> A N Oza, "Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Bill," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual Number, January 1969, p 96.

# COMMUNICATION

## *Development of Capitalist Production in Agriculture*

N RAM (*Social Scientist*, December 1972) has contested almost every proposition put forward by me on the above question. Let us start with what seem to be the more important points of difference between us.

N Ram concurs word for word with P Chattopadhyay in alleging that I am guilty of "one basic theoretical mistake : the failure to see capital as a *relation*." This is an attractive charge to make since it has the virtue of simplicity. In fact, it shows only that N Ram has failed even to understand the question I have tried to raise, leave alone evaluate the tentative answer suggested. I am well aware that capital is a social relation involving the bourgeoisie which possesses the means of production on the one hand, and the proletariat which it employs on wages for profit, on the other. The question I have raised is the following : is every social relation in agriculture between employer and wage labourer, necessarily a capitalist relation? The *logical distinction* between the two propositions is surely not difficult to grasp : (1) capitalist production relations in agriculture certainly imply social relations involving employers and wage labourers; (2) but do social relations involving employers and agricultural labourers, *in every historical situation*, imply capitalist production relations in agriculture? Neither history nor logic gives an unambiguously affirmative answer to this question; and nothing that N Ram (or P Chattopadhyay) have said so far, has thrown any further light on it. The question at dispute is not at all whether capital is a social relation; but whether the *particular* social relations, between land-owners and agricultural wage labourers which developed in colonial India, are to be identified as capitalist relations.

We answer this question in the negative : the special conditions under which the class of agricultural labourers was formed and employed, suggest that we should be extremely wary of *identifying* its existence with capitalist production relations over a substantial sector of Indian agriculture. (We thus question the theoretical basis of the Kotovsky and Gupta estimates of the extent of capitalist farming). There is no point in recapitulating the argument in detail; in its broad outlines it may be summarised as follows : imperialism certainly did break down the

precapitalist social formation in India: the mechanism of colonial exploitation (growth of commodity production, the land revenue systems and enforcement of land transfers) speeded up differentiation within the peasantry and soon produced a semi-proletarianised, pauperised mass within it, over and above the pre-existing class of servile labourers. Typically the labourers were exploited, not by capitalists investing in agriculture but by owners of land in their capacity as landed proprietors appropriating the entire surplus labour. The gains from a rapid expansion of exported commercial crops and such little technical change as occurred, moreover did not accrue in the main to the direct producers themselves but rather seem to have been quite effectively skimmed off by the trinity of State, landlord-moneylender and trader—in the form of higher land revenues, rack rents and usurious interest, and low buying prices.

The economic climate under colonialism thus seems to have favoured the extensive development of particular forms of capital in the agrarian sector as opposed to others, namely, capital in the sphere of *circulation* (trader's, usurer's and land-purchasing capital); while it inhibited the penetration of capital into the sphere of *agricultural production*. This was reflected in the continuing extremely low social productivity of labour in this sector. In short, the peasantry was subjected to forms of exploitation typical of capital *without* a transition to more productive, capitalist relations of production.<sup>1</sup> According to Marx :

Usurer's capital *employs the method of exploitation characteristic of capital, yet without the latter's mode of production . . . .* It does not alter the mode of production but attaches itself firmly to it like a parasite and makes it wretched . . . . (it) belongs with its twin brother, merchant's capital, to the antediluvian forms of capital which long precede the capitalist mode of production.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly,

the price of land is nothing but capitalised and therefore anticipated rent . . . the capital invested by the landowner himself in purchasing the land . . . *has absolutely nothing to do with capital invested in agriculture itself . . .* it is a deduction from the capital which he has available for actual production<sup>3</sup> (Emphasis added).

Needless to say, it is capital *in production* which is the crucial factor deciding whether we are entitled to speak of the development of capitalist production relations, and therefore of the transition to the capitalist mode of production with its associated higher level of productive forces. Marx makes it crystal clear that the 'antediluvian' forms of capital which employ "the method of exploitation characteristic of capital" may nevertheless *not* involve capitalist relations of production and therefore not necessarily change the mode of production into a capitalist one.

While indigenous factory production in India expanded by taking advantage of periods of crisis for world capitalism, this failed to shift the distribution of the total work-force away from its overwhelming dependence on agriculture—around 70 per cent in both 1891 and 1951—or

expand the domestic market for agriculture to any significant extent. On proprietorship of land parcels by peasants Marx says :

*This form of landed property presupposes, as in the earlier order forms, that the rural population greatly predominates over the town population, so that even if the capitalist mode of production otherwise prevails, it is but little developed . . .*<sup>4</sup> (Emphasis added).

The pauperised mass of the landless and near-landless within agriculture was very far from being integrated into a process of expanded reproduction of capital; but formed rather a chronic surplus population forced to subsist on the land as tenants and labourers, whose entire surplus labour was appropriated directly by those monopolising landed property. Under these particular conditions, we cannot *identify* the existence of wage labour with capitalist production relations within Indian agriculture except at the risk of very drastic oversimplification: this has been my argument. It is not that the peasantry did not experience forms of exploitation "characteristic of capital"; but that nevertheless production relations involving labourers were not in the main transformed into capitalist relations, so that no accurate measure of the "capitalist" sector can be obtained from the mere size of the class of agricultural labourers, say, in the 1930's.

To this, P Chattopadhyay has replied<sup>5</sup> with a conceptual tautology : if there is "wage labour" in agriculture this must correspond to "capitalist production relations" within that agriculture, and the fact that the economy concerned is a colony makes no difference whatever; we do not need to consider at all the effects, on this question, of the exploitative relationship of the imperialist metropolis to the colony which has created the modern class of wage labourers in India. This at least is a clear stand : its usefulness seems to us to be very limited. N Ram, unfortunately has not even bothered to understand the question. In his entire communication there is not a single attempt to discuss the argument that under colonialism the process which created a large class of agricultural labourers in India did not have as its counterpart the accumulation of surplus values by an *indigenous* class of agricultural capitalists; but served to prop up the capitalist mode in the metropolis while maintaining the traditional forms of surplus extraction and utilisation within the agrarian sector of the colony.

Let us look more closely at employer-labourer relations from the viewpoint of the forms of exploitation involved. The relation of slave-owner to slave is clearly a precapitalist one : the direct producer, the labourers, is here the property of the master on a par with livestock and other means of production, and may be sold or mortgaged, and his services hired out. In a modified relation the labourer may be a property-less serf tied by extra-economic coercion to the land, and transferred along with it. The slave and serf owner appropriates the entire surplus labour over and above the customarily-determined subsistence of the labourer, and this appears as labour-rent in its product or value form.

In *Capital*, Volume III, Marx pointed out that

We need not further investigate the slave economy proper . . . nor the management of estates under which the landlords themselves are independent cultivators possessing all the instruments of production, and exploiting the labour of free or unfree bondsmen, who are paid either in kind or in money . . . . . *The entire surplus labour of the labourers, which is manifested here in the surplus product, is extracted from them directly by the owner of all instruments of production, to which belongs the land, and, under the original form of slavery, the immediate producers themselves. Where the capitalist outlook prevails, as on the American plantations, the entire surplus value is regarded as profit; where neither the capitalist mode of production itself exists, nor the corresponding outlook has been transferred from capitalist countries, it appears as rent . . . . The income of the landlord, whatever it may be called, the available surplus product appropriated by him, is here the normal and prevailing form whereby the entire surplus labour is directly appropriated, and landed property forms the basis of such appropriation*<sup>6</sup> (Emphasis added).

Such chattel slavery as well as milder forms of agricultural bondage seem to have survived in South India, in particular, well into the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, we have little difficulty in identifying capitalist production relations where agriculture is but "a particular field of investment for his capital" by the capitalist employer who hires labourers on wages and appropriates profit, as with urban investors in agricultural production today in Gujarat or Punjab. It is the *intermediate* range of employer-labourer relations between the two 'pure' cases and the corresponding forms of exploitation, which are so poorly defined that as yet we lack even the concepts to "think" them. In this ill-defined twilight range fall the numerous forms of exploitation of labourers and labour which emerged as a result of the imperialist impact and the consequent "dissolution-conservation" of the agrarian sector of social formations subjected to direct colonialism, as in India.

Chattel slavery and the old-style serfdom seem to have died out gradually in South India in the course of the late nineteenth century, though the caste-based attitudes of domination and servitude still deeply mark employer-labour relations. While pauperisation of the peasantry rapidly expanded the class of agricultural labourers in Madras Presidency (from a maximum estimate of 12-15 per cent of rural working population in the 1890's to over 30 per cent in the 1931 Census),<sup>8</sup> new forms of bondage tended to develop. There was, and is, an enormous heterogeneity in the forms of employer-labourer relations, ranging from the nominally 'free' casual wage worker to the farm servant tied by debt bondage. However, the status of the 'tied' labourer, say, in the 1930's was qualitatively very different from that of the slave or serf on the early nineteenth century Malabar estate. While servile status in the earlier period entailed extra-economic coercion (e.g. floggings of deserting slaves were common), in the

later period economic necessity generally sufficed. A nominally 'free' poor peasant might enter into explicit debt-bondage, or undertake to serve as a farm servant on a very low wage-rate at the employer's beck and call without delimitation of working hours, because there was no guarantee of any alternative means of earning the same bare subsistence income. In short, colonialism itself entailed an economic climate of relative stagnation (combined with creation of markets and a juridical system enforcing contracts) which was conducive to the growth of new economic forms of bondage on a monetised basis. These, as S J Patel has pointed out,<sup>9</sup> must not be confused with precapitalist types of servile status. Secondly, even the nominally quite "free" day labourers were in the main exploited by big landowners in their capacity *as* landowners rather than as capitalists investing in agriculture. What we need are concepts to analyse these and other "transitional" forms of employer-labourer relationships in agriculture, where the employer-landowner appropriates neither 'labour-rent' from the old-type slave or serf, nor 'profit' from the wage worker enmeshed in capitalist relations, but something else which is akin at some level to both without being identical with either. I have been groping, admittedly in a confused way, towards such concepts or at least towards a statement that they are necessary.

N Ram is, therefore, perfectly correct to think that my theoretical approach is expressed in the statement he quotes, relating to employment of labourers in late colonial agriculture:

The labour force is in the main subject to precapitalist, rather than capitalist exploitation. The rich peasant or dominant landholder employing labourers does not appropriate surplus value from free labourers: he maximises the returns from exploiting destitute labourers tied to agriculture and with no other employment opportunities.

(and, we would add, is able to do this clearly because of the concentration of landed property in a relatively stagnant economy where the vast majority of the population is dependent on land). N Ram is mistaken, however, firstly in assuming that I wish somehow to hide my position ("One comment, . . . *gives away* her entire theoretical approach"). Secondly and more importantly, he is mistaken in his complacent assumption that the approach is so "obviously" wrong that not the slightest attempt at a refutation of it needs to be made by him. He may be surprised to learn that to some Marxist scholars, whose bonafides are no less acceptable than his, the approach may even seem quite 'obviously' correct.<sup>10</sup>

No long quotation from Lenin or Marx can be produced in direct support of this thesis, for the simple reason that there is no analysis in Lenin, nor can we reasonably expect one, on the forms of exploitation of labourers/labour under the specific mode of domination experienced by a colony such as India. This does not exclude a high degree of relevance to India of the analytical, abstract part of Lenin's writings on agriculture as distinct from the parts specifically on Russian conditions.<sup>11</sup> At a

general theoretical level we have Marx's suggestive but all too brief remarks—barely one long paragraph—in *Capital*, Volume III, on the exploitation of slave and serf labour, which we have quoted almost in full above. Not even in that part of the *Grundrisse* dealing with forms preceding the capitalist mode as the editor points out, “is there any real discussion of serfdom (any more than of slavery)”<sup>12</sup> as production relations. Indeed Marx set himself the primary task of analysing the genesis and development of the capitalist mode of production—a big enough task on any criterion—and in *Capital*, Volume III, “specifically disclaims the intention of analysing landed property in its different historical forms.”

In the absence of at least half-a-dozen quotations, we fear it will be difficult, perhaps impossible to convince those such as N Ram who set a great store by textual Marxism, that the existence of propertyless peasants working on wages for landowners in a colonial country may, but need not necessarily, imply corresponding capitalist production relations in the agriculture of that country. Fortunately for us Marx did discuss at some length the different historical forms of ground-rent and the corresponding landlord-tenant relations. In the “Genesis of Capitalist Ground Rent”, *Capital*, Volume III, Chapter 47, Marx analyses the precapitalist forms, characteristic of but not confined to the feudal mode: labour rent, and the product and money forms of labour rent; as well as ‘transitional’ forms such as sharecropping where landlord and tenant share the working capital and product (this form not necessarily being identical to Asian forms of sharecropping); while capitalist ground rent is subjected to the most detailed analysis in “The Transformation of Surplus-profit into Ground Rent”, Chapters 37-46. One shudders to think of what might have happened if Marx had confined himself to an analysis only, say, of capitalist ground rent in nineteenth century England. Our textual Marxists would no doubt have identified every *landlord-tenant relation* as a capitalist one and reacted violently to the suggestion that the sharecropper in colonial India or now, for that matter, did not pay capitalist rent; just as they now identify every agricultural *employer-wage labourer relation* as a capitalist one and refuse to consider the suggestion that peasants pauperised into landlessness in a colonised country and forced to sell their labour-power, need not necessarily be enmeshed in capitalist production relations.

It is very interesting that N Ram does explicitly criticise me for talking of the share of product remaining to the petty tenant producer in the Indian agriculture of the inter-war period: “she seems to forget that the question is not of a *small* or *large* share of output remaining to the person after cultivation but of a relation of production. (This confusion itself is an example of what Marx called the *fetishism* of capitalist society).” This is a most remarkable charge. Would N Ram undertake to provide us with direct data on labour exploitation for the period in question, which alone can define relations of production? We fear he cannot, for to our knowledge no such data are available. All we have is

some evidence precisely on the share of output remaining to the tenants, which enables us to *infer* something about production relations. If the tenant was left with a share giving him a bare subsistence, comparable to wages, this means that he paid precapitalist rent; not merely the surplus over and above production costs plus an average profit (as with capitalist rent), but a rent which absorbed the notional "profit" portion and perhaps even ate into the notional "wages" component. Such a rent implies that the production relation involved was definitely not capitalist; and it was to stress this fact that I quoted evidence on the bare-subsistence share of product remaining to the tenant. The importance of whether a "small or large share of output" remains to the tenant should be obvious to anyone who has studied Marx's analysis of the historical forms of ground-rent. Incidentally, Marx makes it clear in a very interesting passage that even if the peasant tenant producer exploits labourers he is not automatically to be regarded as a capitalist tenant unless other circumstances warrant it. On the money form of labour rent, Marx observed that,

The average profit and the price of production regulated thereby are formed outside of relations in the countryside and within the sphere of urban trade and manufacture. The profit of the rent-paying peasant does not enter into it as an equalising factor, *for his relation to the landlord is not a capitalist one. In so far as he makes profit, i.e., realises an excess above his necessary means of subsistence, either by his own labour or through exploiting other people's labour*, it is done behind the back of the normal relationship, and other circumstances being equal, the size of this profit does not determine rent, but on the contrary, it is determined by the rent as its limit (Emphasis added).

I have tried to point out the *similarities* between production relations involving petty tenants and those involving labourers in India, at two different levels: first, in that exactly the same process of pauperisation produced both types of propertyless peasants, (a) those primarily dependent on land leased on high rents for a livelihood and on usurious loans for working capital, (b) those primarily dependent on wages in kind or cash. Secondly, although these clearly represent different forms of exploitation and different production relations, I argued that they did not differ qualitatively to the extent that (b) represented a capitalist production relation while (a)—by definition—was precapitalist. On the contrary, just as the petty tenants were not capitalist producers, so the farm servants and labourers too were, in the main, not involved in capitalist relations. Their entire surplus labour was appropriated by landowners for whom the basis for such appropriation was not capitalist investment in agriculture, but rather their monopoly of landed property as such.

I have coined the term "dominant landholders" to denote such employers of farm servants and labourers who were characterised by absence of productive investment in agriculture. This category corresponds, albeit very roughly indeed, to Marx's reference, quoted earlier, to

"the management of estates under which the landlords themselves are independent cultivators, possessing all the instruments of production and exploiting the labour of free or unfree bondsmen, who are paid either in kind or in money",<sup>13</sup> with the obvious difference that the 'bondsmen' in the Indian case are no longer tied by extra-economic coercion but, as discussed earlier, may be nominally quite "free". Such dominant landowners, thought they exploit wage labourers, are clearly not agricultural capitalists, in Marx's sense, "who differ from other capitalist primarily in the manner in which their capital, and the wage-labour set in motion by the capital, are invested".<sup>14</sup> It is not the case that such a landowner "produces wheat, etc in much the same way as the manufacturer produces yarn or machines"; or that this particular production relation "transforms agriculture from a mere empirical and mechanical self-perpetuating process employed by the least developed part of society into the conscious scientific application of agronomy"; or that it "divorces landed property from the relations of dominion and servitude".<sup>15</sup> Landed property, rather than capitalist investment, formed in this case the basis for the appropriation of surplus labour by the dominant landholders; and this surplus labour in its money form was not generally invested in agricultural production, but more commonly employed—like the landlords' surpluses—for conspicuous consumption, moneylending, trade or land-purchasing, that is, mainly in the sphere of *circulation*.

Thus official enquiries into the state of agriculture in the first half of this century tell us that big landowners and "capitalists" with investible surpluses very seldom undertook any investment in agricultural production;<sup>16</sup> it was more lucrative for them to continue with the traditional avenues of surplus utilisation. Estimates of capital stock per worker in agriculture show a declining trend for the period 1900-1950 for which any data are available and this ties in with the well-known declining trend in agricultural output per worker.<sup>17</sup> Thus in a period when agricultural labourers increased to make up between a quarter to a third of the rural work-force, the social productivity of labour in agriculture was at best static and, on average in most places, falling. Of course, uneven development implies that in particular lines of production under locationally restricted, particularly favourable circumstances (for example, dairy and vegetable production for some urban markets, or production for export) capitalist production may well have arisen; in particular, employment of labourers by rich peasants owning most of their land and investing in it certainly represent nascent capitalist relations. However, the large size of the class of agricultural labourers has little relationship to any estimate of the extent of the genuinely capitalist sector in agriculture, either in the 1930s or in the 1950s; therefore the theoretical basis of the Gupta and Kotovsky estimates of the extent of the 'capitalist' sector in agriculture, is highly dubious. On the whole the economic climate under colonialism was a fetter on the development of capitalist production relations in agriculture, which could grow only

"behind the back of the normal relationship(s)".

Conversely, we have argued that the post-1949 period does represent a break in all earlier trends, in that the entire weight of state intervention has been put behind the promotion of capitalist production, in manufacturing and therefore also in agriculture (through the creation of an expanding domestic market for the latter), while land reforms, however partial, have also reinforced these developments. We therefore do not find P Chattopadhyay's perspective on the growth of capitalism in agriculture as a trend spanning both the colonial and 'independent' periods, to be either very useful from the analytical point of view, or correct as a description of what has actually happened. This belated and highly capital-intensive process of industrialisation, combined with the belated development of capitalist production in agriculture, is making the problem of a chronic relative surplus population ever more acute.

## II

Let us go on to the polemical parts of N Ram's communication. Since he has not understood my total thesis at all, his technique has been to pick up isolated bits and pieces of the argument and assert that they are wrong in some sort of obvious, self-evident way. One certainly almost envies him his simple certainties: "theoretically, the problem is very simple. . . ." "...behind this argument lies a relatively simple theoretical confusion which can be easily resolved. . . ." "...her plain confusion over the question of relations of production and property relations. . . ." N Ram must find his academic work simple and easy indeed!

Let us see how he goes about resolving my plain, simple confusions and leading us all onto the correct theoretical path. Interpreting Marx, "what is meant here is not at all that property relations belong to the superstructure. . . but the relations of production are known in unscientific, loose or legal terminology as property relations. . . ." Apart from the unacceptable implication that Marx habitually used "unscientific, loose. . . terminology"—since he talked so often of property relations—where does this remarkable statement lead us? Precisely nowhere as far as clarifying the status of property relations or their determination by production relations, is concerned. It does show that N Ram needs to think a great deal more on the question; after producing an argument like this, should he not think twice before accusing others of 'vulgarisms'? P Chattopadhyay's assertion about the equivalence of production and property relations under *all* conditions—which I attacked—has been modified already by him to my satisfaction. As Banaji points out,<sup>18</sup> the *identification* of production relations and relations of property (which N Ram takes for granted) cannot be traced to Marx's writings; indeed it is explicitly repudiated by him in "Marginal Notes on Wagner's *Lehrbuch der Politischen Okonomie* (as yet not translated into English). This fallacious identification is not accepted by most Marxist scholars today, whether of the Maoist (Bettelheim, Althusser) or Trotskyist

(Mandel) persuasions.

As for N Ram's derogatory references to my "full-fledged theory" on the introduction of new juridical relations under British rule: we would welcome any theory, even a half-fledged one, from N Ram on this question, in relation perhaps to South India. As a student of history employing the Marxist method, how does he analyse the impact of the *ryotwari* system on juridical relations and on the precapitalist production relations in Madras agriculture of the nineteenth century? N Ram's earlier article on "Impact of Early Colonisation on South India" (*Social Scientist*, November 1972) while discussing a number of other very interesting questions, contained very little on its ostensible subject. N Ram must realise that if he disagrees with my theory (which is by no means 'full-fledged' but in the nature of preliminary suggestions) the only fruitful avenue of debate is to produce a counter-theory. A plethora of exclamation marks is really no substitute for argument.

There is one consistent point of theoretical ambiguity in N Ram's approach which he has sought to project on to my arguments, and this is the distinction between analytical (theoretical-conceptual) and descriptive categories. Marxist theory operates with a number of analytical concepts (such as "bourgeoisie", "proletariat", "class", "mode of production") which represent a certain level of *abstraction*. In the analysis of a given social formation, or of a specific historical situation we require "analysis of the empirically given circumstances" which may show "infinite variations and gradations of appearance" even with the "same economic basis—the same from the standpoint of its main conditions",<sup>19</sup> and therefore descriptive categories *specific to* that situation must also be used. An example is Lenin's enumeration of the different forms of semi-serf bondage of peasants in pre-Revolution Russia.<sup>20</sup>

Now N Ram takes me to task for employing the categories "dominant landholders" and "urban entrants" and says that they are "descriptive and unscientific categories hardly applicable in a Marxist-Leninist class analysis". Of course they are descriptive categories, and consciously used by me as such; I have been advisedly careful never to talk of a *class* of urban entrants or of dominant landowners. Does N Ram deny the need for description? If so, he must inhabit a strangely abstract world! And why, in what sense, are descriptive categories "unscientific" if used as descriptive categories? I am *describing* the different groups making a transition to capitalist production, which thus form elements only of a developing *class*, the agricultural bourgeoisie. Incidentally N Ram's favoured category of "capitalist landlords" is as much a *descriptive* category as any of the others and this is not altered by the fact that this particular category may also be used—quite correctly—by the CPI(M)! The content of the term "dominant landholders" and its basis in Marx, has been indicated already. As for "urban entrants," Marx states:

as soon as rent assumes the form of money-rent . . . the *leasing of land*

*to capitalists inevitably makes its appearance.* The latter hitherto stood beyond the rural limits, and now carry over to the countryside and agriculture the capital acquired in the cities and with it the capitalist mode of operation developed—i.e, creating a product as a mere commodity and solely as a means of appropriating surplus value.<sup>21</sup>

Again,

“in the transformation of rent in kind into money-rent . . . capitalised rent or the price of land, and thus its alienability and alienation become essential factors, and . . . thereby not only can the former peasant subject to rent be transformed into an independent peasant proprietor, but also *urban and other moneyed people can buy real estate* in order to lease it either to peasants or capitalists and thus enjoy rent as a form of interest on their capital so invested (Emphasis added).

My category “urban entrants” refers precisely to such “urban and moneyed people,” capitalists who are today buying or otherwise acquiring land; except that they do not normally lease it out but cultivate directly or through salaried managers on a capitalist basis in order to appropriate the entire surplus value—both average profit and the surplus profit (rent).

N Ram also objects strongly to my comments on the wage-imputation exercise in the Farm Management Studies; why, it is not at all clear. I was discussing the choice which individual poor peasants have, between trying to get some land on rent (or keeping land if they already have some), and working as full-time labourers. This FMS exercise indicates that the daily wage-rate for hired labour in many areas is *higher* than the daily reward to family labour on small holdings. I argued that nevertheless the high unemployed days among labourers plus the uncertainty of getting work at all, imposes a *land-hunger* on them, because land is the only *guarantee* of a certain minimum subsistence income, though this may have to be purchased at the cost of very low return per labour day. In most areas, therefore, the poor peasant would prefer cultivating land even as a tenant, to being a full-time labourer, though of course he may not be able to realise this aim. According to N Ram, in this argument “one single factor—employment—is made to bridge the gap between *two different classes* and two different sets of relations of production”—presumably referring to tenants and labourers. Once again, N Ram has himself imported an analytical category, ‘class’ into the discussion whereas I had deliberately avoided it since we are talking of a specific empirical observation. Let N Ram answer this question: to which single class and distinct production relation would he assign a poor peasant who gets half his income from cultivating rented land, and the other half from wage-labour? Is he a tenant or a labourer? He will find that objective reality itself is constantly bridging “the gap between . . . different classes and . . . different sets of relations of production”—not surprisingly, for ‘class’ and ‘production relation’ are our own conceptual-theoretical

tools for analysing reality; there can never be a one-to-one correspondence between these concepts, and constantly shifting empirical circumstances (if there was we would no longer have a theory but only description). We suggest that N Ram might usefully clarify his own ideas about the role of *abstraction* in Marxist theory, and the place of *description* in the analysis of given situations, before he imputes his own methodological confusions to me.

On the question of the 'viability' of the poor peasant producer, N Ram indignantly accuses me of "only reacting against" bourgeois economists. But surely it is absolutely necessary to 'react against' bourgeois economists, to try to refute their arguments by a proper analysis of precisely the same data which they use in a mystifying, ideological manner. We reject N Ram's implication that it is sufficient to quote only the classic literature. Let us remember that at the theoretical level, Marx had already provided in *Capital* a clear analysis of the so-called 'viability' of self-employed peasants with parcellised landholdings: the low price of agricultural products which is a reflection not of high productivity but "of the producers' poverty", the payment of high rents and high prices for small land parcels by depressing the reward to family labour "down to a physical minimum"<sup>22</sup> and the like.

Neither Kautsky nor Lenin however was content just with quoting Marx's analysis. Kautsky used the available concrete data to explicitly 'react against' bourgeois interpretations of it and to show that "the peasant art of starvation may lead to the greater 'efficiency' of small-scale production", and Lenin cites his results while "reacting against" Bulgakov. Now we have concrete data from the Farm Management Studies and other sources relating to present-day Indian agriculture, which is being used in petty-bourgeois arguments about the 'efficiency' of small-scale production; whereas when properly analysed they show not only that the dwarf-holding peasants remain viable only by depressing consumption (as Kautsky found with the 1880's European data) but *also* an additional significant fact: the daily reward to the family labour of poor peasants is in many cases *lower* than the market wage rate, which is already extremely low. All this matters not a jot to N Ram, who ignores the content of my analysis of the data and instead patronisingly criticises me for not giving quotations from Lenin. This is in line with his textual bias—shared we fear by others—which is quite content to *substitute* a quotation (not even that—a casual reference to the classic literature, whose empirical basis is now 80 years old) for the more difficult job of analysing contemporary Indian statistics from a Marxist point of view, of "soiling one's hands" with empirical work. This regrettable attitude lies behind the fact that there has been not a single Marxist refutation so far *using the available data* of petty-bourgeois interpretations of that data which talk of the "efficiency" of small-scale production. One wishes that our textual Marxists who are so fond of merely giving quotations from Lenin, would try to apply Lenin's method

of the most detailed and painstaking analysis of the available data, to Indian conditions. We would strongly urge N Ram to "react against" bourgeois-economists, instead of criticising those who are trying to do so.

To conclude : an analysis of the agrarian structure, and of the main tendency of development in it, acquires interest from its relevance to concrete political programmes on land reform. So far the debate on the existence and extent of capitalist production in Indian agriculture has been at an abstract level, and the differing political implications of the different views which have emerged, have not been discussed explicitly. Perhaps it is time that this was done.

UTSA PATNAIK

<sup>1</sup> The generalisations put forward here have been discussed in greater detail elsewhere. In the present brief summary some oversimplification is inevitable.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol III, (version edited by F Engels), Progress Publishers, Moscow 1966 (published in UK by Lawrence & Wishart), pp 693, 596-597.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p 808.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p 804.

<sup>5</sup> See P Chattopadhyay, "On the Mode of Production in Indian Agriculture", Review of Agriculture, pp 185-192, *Economic and Political Weekly*, December 30, 1972 : "If, and to the extent in which, it is generalised commodity production—in the sense of commodity production at its highest stage with labour power becoming a commodity—that appeared in India, the production relations here were capitalist, otherwise not. The fact of imposition from outside is irrelevant in this context."

<sup>6</sup> Karl Marx, *op. cit.*, p 804.

<sup>7</sup> B Hjejle, "Slavery and Agricultural Bondage in South India in the 19th Century", *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, Vol XV, Nos 1 and 2, 1967.

<sup>8</sup> See D Kumar, *Land and Caste in South India*, Cambridge 1965, especially chapter III. The author wishes to show that the creation of the modern class of agricultural labourers cannot be attributed to the effects of British rule. Her own estimates of the 'slave' and 'serf' castes as a proportion of rural population in the late nineteenth century however indicate that only a part of the modern class of agricultural labourers can be traced to that source.

<sup>9</sup> S J Patel, *Agricultural Labourers in Modern India and Pakistan*, Bombay 1952, pp 83-84.

<sup>10</sup> One Soviet scholar, L Rudin goes to the extent of arguing that the existence of a large rural surplus population forced to accept subsistence wages, far from representing capitalist production, actually militates against the capitalist transformation of production relations in Indian agriculture. See S Clarkson, "In Search of a Communist Development Model", *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 18, 1972, p 628, quoting Rudin's review of V G Rastvannikov and M A Maksimov, *The Development of Capitalism in Modern India's Agriculture*. Baudhayan Chatterjee appears to subscribe to this argument. Our emphasis is different : it is not subsistence wages as such which prevented capitalist production (South Africa is a flourishing capitalist economy paying its tied African labour bare subsistence wages)—but rather the long relative stagnation in the domestic market for agricultural products, in turn reflecting the slow growth of manufacturing industry. Since the mid-50s state capitalism has expanded the domestic market; the resulting impetus to capitalist production in agriculture is, if anything, strengthened by subsistence wages, for the rural capitalist can reap super-profits. How the present

prolonged industrial recession will affect agricultural profitability, remains to be seen.

<sup>11</sup> For example, Lenin's comments on the proper analysis of agricultural data for revealing economic and hence class differentiation are relatively ignored though they are so valuable. I have tried to apply his concepts in my "Economics of Farm Size and Farm Scale", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special Number, July 1972.

<sup>12</sup> Karl Marx, *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, E J Hobsbawm (Ed), p 41.

<sup>13</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol III, *op. cit.*, pp 614-620.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Report*, Calcutta 1928, p 425 : "The complaint that the large landlords do little for the development of their estates is a very general one and the honourable exceptions to be found in every province are too few in numbers to do more than throw into relief the apathy of the majority."

<sup>17</sup> T Shukla, *Capital Formation in Indian Agriculture*, Bombay 1965; and G Blyn, *Agricultural Trends in India, 1897-1947*, Philadelphia 1966.

<sup>18</sup> J Banaji, "Colonialism and Capitalism : Some Comments on Chattopadhyay's Anti-Kritik", *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 1973.

<sup>19</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol III, *op. cit.*, p 792.

<sup>20</sup> V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 2 (I), Chapter III, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1964.

<sup>21</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol III, *op. cit.*, p 799.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 804-812.

## Report on Famine, 1972-73

### *On a Survey of Famine Conditions in Sakri Taluka of Maharashtra*

*Sharad Patil*

THE staff of the Arts and Commerce College at Sakri, Dhulia district, recently conducted a sample survey of Sakri taluka on the impact of the 1972-73 famine, and published their findings in a report in Marathi. Despite its brevity and shortcomings, it is, on the whole, a vivid and revealing report despite the exoneration of the Congress Government from its minimum responsibilities for this 'natural calamity' and the fulsome praise showered on the forced, halting and inadequate steps to meet the ravages of the famine.

The title of the report can be faithfully rendered as "The Nature, Range and Intensity of the Famine in Sakri Taluka (1972-73)". But do the learned professors know that the very use of the term 'famine' is abhorred by the Government of Maharashtra whose Chief Minister declared that all state governments have agreed to interpret the term as 'scarcity' in accordance with a Central Government directive? The morale of the people would sink at the mere mention of the word 'famine'. Its use should, therefore, be avoided.

Scarcity means partial famine. Declaration of *scarcity* enjoins upon the government to suspend the collection of land revenue of that year, while the suspension of the instalments of loans advanced by government or co-operative agencies is optional. On the other hand, once a *famine* is declared, it is incumbent on the government, in conformity with British precedent, to remit the instalments of land revenue and loans. As the famine broke out last year I urged the former Collector of Dhulia district to grant similar concessions. He put his finger on the provision in the Land Revenue Code, a creature of the British, which stipulates that a famine can be declared only if scarcity continues for a consecutive period of three years. A *de facto* famine is but *de jure* if it lasts for one year or even two years. It can attain the unattainable appellation of 'famine' only if the juggernaut grinds on for three long years at a stretch.

The report has not touched upon another fundamental aspect of the problem. Is the State Government bent upon eradicating, by legal

enactment and executive action, the ever-recurring and increasing menace of scarcity and famine as is claimed by its spokesmen? Apart from the fact that irrigated land in Maharashtra has moved up from 5 to 7 per cent in 25 years of independence, out of the numerous percolation tanks undertaken as scarcity works, very few will be completed. For example, by June 30, 1973, the dateline set for the gradual lifting of scarcity relief, not more than half a lakh of rupees would be spent on many of the percolation tanks estimated to cost between 2 and 3 lakhs of rupees. The embankments of only a small number of tanks were pressed by mechanised rollers. As a result, most of the tanks will be washed away with the first heavy downpour of rain. The water table will remain where it was or sink lower, leaving the wells that were to benefit from these percolation tanks more vulnerable to future famines. Most of the new irrigation works taken up as scarcity projects will be given up for lack of funds. The recipients of the sumptuous loans earmarked for the so-called 'community' wells are again the 'individual' rich peasants and capitalist landlords. It is again the affluent sections that have made away with all the loans and subsidies, evaded the levy and procurement and reaped the fabulous harvest of the price rise.

Two tables from the report are reproduced below which demonstrate the impact of the famine on different sections of landholders in Sakri taluka. The first table deals with the production of sugarcane during the 'normal' year 1971-72 and the famine year 1972-73 :

TABLE I  
SUGARCANE PRODUCTION

Category of landholder	1971-72		1972-73	
	Average cultivated area (acres)	Average production (tons)	Average cultivated area (acres)	Average production (tons)
More than 50 acres (irrigated 20 acres)	7.3	25.60	11.7	18
30 to 50 acres (irrigated 10 acres)	6.5	30.00	7.5	22
20 to 25 acres (irrigated 5 acres)	1.0	20.00	1.5	15
0 to 10 acres	0.5	23.00	0.5	23

The report observes that the overall fall in production of sugarcane is 25 per cent and that the production by small landholders has not registered the fall to the same extent as they had not increased the area under the crop.

TABLE 2  
PRODUCTION OF BAJRA

Category of landholder	1971-72		1972-73		Average fall fall (per cent)
	Cultivated area (acres)	Production (quintals)	Cultivated area (acres)	Production (quintals)	
More than 50 acres (irrigated 20 acres)	20	42	17.4	25.8	30
30 to 50 acres (irrigated 10 acres)	9	20	10.0	13.0	30
20 to 30 acres (irrigated 5 acres)	8	10	0.8	5.6	45
10 to 20 acres (irrigated 5 acres)	5	10	5.2	5.0	50
Non-irrigated	6	9	6.0	3.0	66

The fall in bajra production is steeper as we go down the ladder, the landholders of non-irrigated land being the greatest losers. The same trend is noticed in the production of wheat and groundnut.

The classification of landholders is far from systematic and the economic strata to which they belong have to be deduced from the physical impact of the famine on each of these groups. The landholders with more than 50 acres (20 acres irrigated) are found to have been so little affected by the famine that not only have they not to toil on scarcity works, but they have not felt it necessary to postpone the marriages due to be celebrated this year. The report fights shy of noting that the marriage ceremonies are being celebrated with increased expenditure and pomp. A recent marriage at Matpur in the taluka is estimated to have cost not less than half a lakh of rupees, and the dowry paid to the bridegroom is said to have been Rs 32,000. This category is evidently the capitalist landlord.

The landholders owning 20 to 30 acres (irrigated area 5 to 10 acres) also have not been compelled to work on scarcity projects, though some of them had to postpone the marriages due this year. This is the rich peasant category.

Fifty per cent of the group owning 10 to 20 acres (2 to 5 acres irrigated) have been forced to seek their livelihood on scarcity works and had to sell their livestock and mortgage or sell their lands and face starvation. This is the middle peasant category.

Those owning exclusively non-irrigated land are the poor peasants.

The report says that 60 per cent of these peasants had to dispose of their livestock and utensils and mortgage or sell the land; 50 per cent of them are starving partially.

The landless labourers are the worst hit victims of the famine. Though some are employed in agricultural operations on yearly or monthly or daily wage terms, the majority have been rendered jobless with the expiry of the agricultural year, and not more than a quarter of those formerly employed have been absorbed again on the commencement of the agricultural year. The rest of them are knocking at the doors of scarcity works. In Sakri only a small fraction of the labour force on scarcity works will return to agricultural work with the onset of the rains, and that only for the sowing season.

The poor peasants, now on the work sites, who have no bullocks surviving, will have to stay back; and high school boys above 14 years also will have to continue working, foregoing their education. About ten per cent of these working people live in houses, while the rest crowd into huts. Cheap grain shops cater only to between 5 and 10 per cent of their needs and hence they are completely at the mercy of open or 'black' markets. The daily wages on scarcity works have been raised by 50 paise recently to Rs 2.50 to Rs 3. But after slaving for the whole day the workers barely receive Re 1 to Rs 1.50, compared to the daily wage of Rs 4.75 paid to the unskilled road labourers employed by the Buildings and Construction Department of the Zilla Parishad. Irregularity and fraud mark the payment of daily wages for scarcity work. To make matters worse, bajra and jowar, the staple foodgrains of the rural workers, are sold at about Rs 2.50 per kilo, pulses at Rs 3.50 and groundnut oil at Rs 9 per kilo. The price index of 221 (1960=100) is evidently an underestimate, for the prices have more than doubled during the famine itself. No wonder the report puts 80 per cent landless labourers as undergoing acute starvation.

The report takes Rs 33 as the minimum required at present for the upkeep of a person for a month. On this basis, it finds that only the first two categories, that is, 6 per cent of the rural population in the taluka, are above the minimum subsistence level while the rest, 94 per cent, live below this level. The adivasis are the poorest of the lot, their per capita expenditure being Rs 8.5 per month!

"War is a continuation of politics", but famine is definitely a continuation of Congress politics. The authors of the report observe, Famine is causing the sale of rural wealth in the form of livestock, utensils, houses and lands. Agricultural labourers and poor peasants are compelled to sell much of their movable and immovable wealth. It is being bought off at low prices by big farmers. . . and thus a new type of landlordism is being created. The new landlordism is more strong and durable than the old one. The present landlordism occupies a most strategic position in the social set-up. . . . In spite of the lower ceilings, these acts have left so many loopholes that they

pose absolutely no threat to the new landlords. It is true that the new landlords do not own vast stretches of land like the old ones. But in this era of the 'green revolution' it is not at all necessary to own big tracts of land in order to produce more. There is less of feudalism in the new system, for it is basically capitalism itself!

It is this 'new landlordism' that is interested in preserving the semi-feudal set-up of the countryside and its concomitant, the accelerating wheel of scarcities and famines. Such a retrogressive ruling class fattens on the intensifying travail of the rural poor and the increasing bankruptcy of the nation. More than half a crore of people are toiling on a pittance on the scarcity works all over Maharashtra. Dhulia district, the last and the tenth to be declared an 'intensive scarcity' area has more than a lakh and a quarter people on the scarcity works, ranging from a hundred labourers to many thousands on one site. This is the only time when the rural poor, connected with primitive and individual means of production and the most unorganised section of the Indian people, are amenable to militant organisation like the industrial workers. When the 'scarcity' is over, they will carry a new outlook back to their villages. It is they who in alliance with industrial labour can change the present reactionary social set-up. The strikes and demonstrations by 15 lakh scarcity workers on 16 May and the sympathetic strike of a million industrial workers on 15 and 25 May are harbingers of a new era in Maharashtra.

## SYMPOSIUM

### *Class Character of State Power in India*

*In response to persistent demands from readers and friends of the Social Scientist, we are publishing below the conclusions of the Second All India Conference on 'Marxian Approach to Research in Social Sciences' held at the Madras Christian College, Tambaram, on the theme 'Class Character of State Power in India'. This document is the product of collective thinking and discussion of a wide cross-section of scholars drawn from academic institutions and universities all over India, trade unionists and political leaders. It was adopted by the All India Conference. We introduce it below as the opening piece in a full-fledged symposium to be continued in the forthcoming issues of the Social Scientist.*

*The first contribution to the Symposium is from S Naqui who expresses a viewpoint distinctly different from the consensus of the All India Conference. We hope that further contributions to the Symposium will enrich the discussion.*

ONE of the methods of determining the nature of the state is to examine the mode of production and see which class or classes own and control the means of production. The basic criterion is: which are the classes for whose benefit essentially state power is exercised as indicated by the overall direction of state policy. Certain classes or strata which may occasionally or incidentally be given concessions are to be distinguished from classes whose interests are consistently supported and defended by the state.

The second, but subordinate, criterion may be the relations existing between the parties or persons immediately controlling organs of state power and representatives of various classes.

#### INDUSTRY AND FOREIGN CAPITAL

A review of the 26 years of economic development in the field of industry in terms of the growth of productive forces as well as the growth of the various segments of the capitalist class reveals that:

- a) the structure of industry has substantially changed, with a broadening of the industrial base, key and heavy sectors, though crucial gaps still remain;
- b) the proportionate contribution of industry has not changed significantly, though the absolute volume of production has certainly increased;
- c) the share of the tertiary sector has increased, which is an indication of the parasitic nature of development of monopoly capital on such a poor industrial base. Incidentally, it was observed that this growth of the tertiary sector has led to the growth of the white collar workers, who are in increasing numbers organising themselves into trade unions and fighting side by side with the industrial workers;
- d) the pattern of industrialisation has been uneven and such as to leave the problem of regional disparities essentially untouched;
- e) along with regional disparities, sectoral imbalances have also grown;
- f) during the last phase of this period, it has been noticed that the problem of markets which for a short period during the Second Five Year Plan and the early part of the Third Plan was becoming less acute, has emerged very sharply again and reached an accentuated form.

Regarding the impact of this development, it may be noted that the size of the working class in the organised sector (factories, plantations, mines and transport) has grown substantially, though their share in the total labour force has changed only marginally. Though the level of living of the working class improved till the mid-50s, it tended to decline since the early 60s. A large segment of the working class is struggling hard to maintain their real wages at pre-war levels. Consequently, the increases in industrial production have largely benefited the capitalists.

Though the condition of the working class is better than that of the ever-increasing army of the unemployed or that of the agricultural workers, its revolutionary potential and leadership in the democratic struggles can and must be developed through proper political-ideological education and relentless struggles against economism among the working class and trade union organisations. The real income of the middle class employees has also continuously deteriorated over the two decades so much so that militant trade unionism among the middle class employees has also developed. These middle class movements are becoming part of the working class movement, not dominating it, but inspired by the greater struggle of the working class. This is important in the context of the deepening economic crisis.

### *Composition of the Bourgeoisie*

A differentiation has grown among the bourgeoisie, and a proper classification within the ranks of the Indian bourgeoisie should be in terms of size. Broadly, three sections have come into existence during

the last 26 years, namely, monopoly bourgeoisie, medium-sized bourgeoisie and the small bourgeoisie. While for the most part of the period, despite declarations and legal enactments to the contrary, the bourgeoisie as a whole has grown, the rate of growth has been highest in the monopoly section, followed by the medium and small bourgeoisie trailing one after the other. The monopoly bourgeoisie can be easily identified. Available data reveal that a few industrial houses together control the overwhelming part of industrial productive resources. In the later part of this period the small bourgeoisie is fighting for its existence, its total number having decreased. While in many cases the small scale sector functions as an ancillary of big business, there are several cases where there is competition between the big and small bourgeoisie for raw material, inputs, finances and markets.

It is wrong to characterise the Indian bourgeoisie as comprador; there is also no such category as the bureaucratic bourgeoisie in India.

There has been a greater penetration of foreign capital, particularly US owned, and absolute gross foreign aid has enormously increased, though growth of indigenous capital has been greater.

Foreign debt constitutes a substantial proportion of the total assets in the organised sector. The net inflow from public institutions such as the World Bank, IDA and others is being reduced, though this is not due to the conscious attitude of the government, but because imperialist countries are not ready to lend. Hence, it is apparent that the growth of the public sector has assisted the growth of the big bourgeoisie by mobilising finances, allocating them in favour of big business, by producing raw materials and providing them cheaply in favour of big business and generating effective demand in favour of the big bourgeoisie. Moreover, the state has contributed directly to the growth of monopoly bourgeoisie by its tariff and taxation policies and by its limited fight against imperialism and foreign capital.

The inflow of foreign private investment continues to increase but at a decreasing pace. Imperialist influence is also reflected in the fact of its insistence of the continued import of foreign technology; this acts as a fetter both to the development and to the utilisation of the existing domestic technology and consultancy services.

It is important to note the impact of feudal and semi-feudal relations in agriculture on the capitalist development in industry. Such relations affect the extent of market for industrial products as well as the supply of raw material for agro-based industries. These constraints have affected the rate of growth and distorted development.

The problems faced by the bourgeoisie in the latest phase of its development is primarily characterised by the shrinkage of the market compared to the availability of funds and the capacities installed in the country. A flow of capital, though not yet large, to countries in Africa and South East Asia has begun, so that products of Indian industry may be sold in those countries. Not more than 20 crores of rupees have been

thus exported, and its significance has yet to be assessed.

Simultaneously, there has been a substantial increase in unemployment throughout this period. This has been further accentuated in recent years by the growing economic crisis. This crisis of the market has also led to the extension of credit through the nationalised banks to the so-called neglected sectors of the economy. These developments have to be seen in the background of the latest stage, the third phase of the general crisis of capitalism, the consequent intensification of inter-imperialist rivalry, the sharpened monetary crisis, the drying up of foreign aid and the shrinking of markets. An interesting consequence of this problem of markets faced by both Indian and foreign capitalists is the new suggestion of exploiting cheap Indian resources (raw material and labour) jointly by Indian and foreign capital and selling the output in the international market which is already controlled by foreign imperialists. While this may mean an increase in the inflow of private foreign capital into India, the flow of governmental funds may actually decrease.

#### AGRARIAN STRUCTURE

In order to avoid possible confusion about certain terms employed in the discussion on the agrarian question it is necessary to define certain basic concepts relating to classes in the rural areas:

1) *Agricultural Labour* : Those who may not have any land or have owned or leased small bits of agricultural land but earn a livelihood mainly through the sale of their wage labour in agriculture or allied occupations.

2) *Poor Peasants* : Those whose main income is derived from land leased or owned but who employ no wage labour at all. Some of them work for wages. In many cases, they live below the margin of subsistence.

3) *Middle Peasants* : Those who own or lease in land which is worked predominantly by their family and also by wage labour. They earn sufficient income in normal years to meet their minimum needs. They may also earn a surplus in exceptionally good years which they may convert into capital. However, they run into debts in lean years in which case they are likely to join the ranks of poor peasants.

4) *Rich Peasants* : There exists some confusion about this category of peasants. The distinguishing feature of the rich peasants is that they normally employ wage labour, seasonal or annual, in addition to their own family labour. When wage labour employed is large, a rich peasant may also be called a capitalist peasant. Normally, rich peasants earn a surplus through their agricultural operations except in very bad years.

5) *Landlords* : Landlords are those who do not participate manually in the agricultural processes. Within this there are two categories : (a) capitalist landlords—whose main income comes from hiring labour and exploiting it either through managers or through personal supervision; (b) feudal landlords—whose income is based on feudal exploitation in the form of rent, usurious interest and/or other extra economic form of feudal

exploitation.

Though these are the main classes for purposes of definition, in practice there may be some overlapping. Besides, there may be marginal cases where people, though poor, may not till their land because of caste or other social factors.

### *Land Reforms*

Since independence land reforms have helped to remove statutory intermediaries but have not smashed feudal and semi-feudal land relations. Though some land has been acquired and distributed through ceiling legislation, the relations between legal title holder and the actual tiller remain unchanged. Besides, insofar as the price of land represents the capitalised value of feudal payments, the tiller of the soil may still be deemed to carry the burden of feudal payments.

### *Changes in Production Relations*

Though up-to-date data on the structure of agricultural classes are not yet available, the existing data indicate that the percentage of agricultural labour in the working population has increased from 17 per cent in 1961 to 26 per cent in 1971. There has also been a noticeable change in the technology of agriculture by way of increase in irrigation, rural electrification, introduction of pumpsets and tractors and so on since independence. By and large, investments in these assets as well as availability of modern inputs like improved seeds, fertilisers and so on have largely helped the rich peasants and landlords in the rural areas.

*The problem of identification of feudal and capitalist elements in agriculture, the nature and extent of feudal and semi-feudal relations persisting in agriculture, the nature and extent of capitalist development and its prospects* should be examined in all aspects. The criterion employed to distinguish feudal from capitalist elements is the method of exploitation. As mentioned earlier, the distinguishing feature of capitalist relations in land is the use of wage labour. As for feudal exploitation there is a distinction between classical feudalism where the serf was tied to the landlord by custom or status and the Indian situation today where the peasants are not tied down to the landlords in this sense. At the same time, they are subjected to several forms of feudal and semi-feudal exploitation by way of rack-rent, usurious interest rates, and other payments arising from extra-economic pressures. Though there is general consensus about the existence of feudal and semi-feudal relations in agriculture, there are difficulties in collecting factual data about the exact nature and extent of such relations. Nevertheless the phenomenon appears to be quite extensive. According to certain tentative estimates, about 15-20 per cent of the agricultural population seems to live on some form of tenancy or the other. Official statistics relating to the 1961 census also indicate that holdings of above 5 hectares cover more than 50 per cent of

the cultivated area. It is obvious that except in extremely dry and desert areas, a cultivator with 5 hectares and above, i.e, 12.5 acres or above, would normally require wage labour for the cultivation of such holdings. It may, therefore, be inferred that more than 50 per cent of the cultivated area in India is under the capitalist mode of production. This includes the use of wage labour by feudal and semi-feudal types of land relations. Though one might envisage a transition from feudal and semi-feudal to purely capitalist mode of production, it appears that in India the capitalist mode of production has been superimposed on feudal and semi-feudal relations. That is why it is difficult to determine what portion of capitalist farming is based on feudal or semi-feudal land relations. At the same time, it should be noted that within the capitalist sector there is a growing tendency towards mechanisation of agricultural operations in varying degrees in different regions. Such development is largely restricted to irrigated areas, particularly where controlled irrigation is available. Though the purpose of land reforms is to transform feudal and semi-feudal relations in land, in actual fact, capitalist features tend to grow even when feudal and semi-feudal relations exist in substantial areas in the country. It is also true that there are wide variations in the pattern of land relations between different regions.

Monetisation in agriculture has increased. Marketing and institutional finance are better organised. There has also been some attempt to improve the market environment and evolve a price support policy. But the so-called guaranteed minimum economic price is far beyond the grasp of the masses of the toiling peasant. These advantages largely accrue to the rich peasants and landlords who have the staying power with regard to agricultural commodities.

### *Scope and Extent of the 'Green Revolution'*

Where hybrid seeds, water, fertilisers and credit have been combined in an adequate measure there has been substantial increase in production per acre particularly with regard to wheat. But insofar as such increase in productivity has been restricted to areas provided with controlled water supply, its scope is largely restricted to only such areas. Besides, insofar as concentration of ownership of land is more acute in irrigated areas, the benefits of increased productivity have largely accrued to rich farmers. At the same time, it has been found that the displacement of labour through mechanisation and stickiness of their real wages has resulted in growing disparity in income and consequently led to increasing tensions in the rural areas.

### *Relative Weight of Feudal and Capitalist Landlords*

Despite the various measures undertaken to change the agrarian structure and land relations, there has been no significant change in the basic structure or in the pattern of land relations. The loopholes in the various land legislations, the obstacles encountered on account

of the constitutional provisions and attitudes of the judiciary, the half-hearted administrative measures attempted by the bureaucracy may all have contributed towards the superimposition of capitalist mode of production over feudal and semi-feudal land relations. The fact that the landed interests have largely succeeded in circumventing the main objectives of the various land reform measures indicates that the interests of the landlords could not be ignored. This is particularly evident in the case of concentration of ownership in land. Despite the interests of the industrial capital in enlarging its markets by abolishing concentration of ownership in land, they seem to be reconciled to the fact that about 10 per cent of total households cover more than 50 per cent of the operational land. On the other hand, more than 50 per cent of the total households seems to control not more than 7 per cent of the operational holdings. This objective reality has led us to conclude that state power is really shared by the landlords and the industrial bourgeoisie, especially under the leadership of monopoly capitalists.

#### *INSTRUMENTS OF STATE POWER*

There is general agreement on : (a) that an analysis of the Constitution can help in the class characterisation of state power, (b) that the character of the Constitution is to be ascertained not only by analysing its provisions but also by finding out how they are implemented, (c) that special attention should be paid to what kind of rights are guaranteed and protected, and what kind of powers are ensured.

The Indian Constitution reflects a sharing of power between the bourgeoisie and the landlords. The Constitution serves the interests of all the manifestations of landlordism. Though there has been a weakening of the princely privileges and intermediary interests, there has been, in general, a superimposition of the capitalist mode of production upon the feudal and semi-feudal relations whose features still persist in the countryside. However, it should be noted that in the sharing of state power, the landlords are the junior partners and the Constitution reflects this reality. Though the exclusive interests of the industrial bourgeoisie would lie in the complete removal of remnants of feudal and semi-feudal relations besides the enlargement of the market through an equitable distribution of land ownership, the fact that these features continue to assert themselves indicates that the big bourgeoisie is incapable of completing such a bourgeois democratic revolution.

It is important to note the class composition of the Constituent Assembly which was elected indirectly and on the basis of a limited franchise. The partition of the country was accepted by the bourgeoisie in its eagerness for power. The same eagerness was behind the drastic concessions to the princes in the scheme of transfer of power.

A scrutiny of the provisions relating to fundamental rights and the manner in which they were implemented amply highlights the class bias of the Constitution. It clearly emerges as an instrument for protection

of property rights. There is no distinction made in part III of the Constitution between the property of foreign interests and of indigenous property owners, and protection of property is obviously extended to foreign capital as well. This is further evidenced by the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1948 which clearly lays down that the interests of foreign capitalists are protected and it is reiterated in the subsequent Industrial Policy Resolutions. That, in fact, reflects the compromise which Indian bourgeoisie has struck with foreign capital. The 24th amendment would not basically alter the ownership structure obtaining at present in the country. The amendment, however, reflects an accentuation of contradictions within the ruling alliance which is the direct result of the growing pressure of the democratic movement. At the same time the ruling classes are likely to misuse the amendment to curb civil liberties and minority rights.

The constitutional framework clearly provides for the leading role of the big bourgeoisie in the ruling combine. There is concentration of powers at the Centre, where the big bourgeoisie predominantly ensures its hegemony in the exercise of state power. Moreover, several provisions of the Constitution, such as the emergency powers of the President, are designed precisely to interfere in federal matters and topple any government in the states that becomes inconvenient for the Centre.

The Congress Party, which opposed the 1935 Constitution as an instrument serving the interests of British imperialism in India, had no hesitation in bodily lifting almost all the provisions relating to Centre-State relations which have served the interests of big bourgeois since independence.

India is a multi-national state. The big bourgeoisie has a leading role in the state, particularly at the Centre, and has also a leading role in oppressing the nationalities. These features have important implications for Centre-State relations.

In its quest for ever-expanding markets the big bourgeoisie runs roughshod over the legitimate aspirations of the various nationalities in India, thereby deepening the conflict between the different nationalities and the big bourgeoisie. Simultaneously this thrust of the big bourgeoisie aggravates the uneven development of capitalism in the different regions. The policy of developing capitalism in the interests of the big bourgeoisie required concentration of economic power in a centralised authority.

A large concentration of power at the Centre makes a mockery of federal principles and hinders the all-round development of the peoples of different states in its own ways. Whenever governments in states pose a challenge to the class rule at the Centre, they are ignominiously thrown out by using or misusing the Constitution.

There are enough provisions in the Constitution to turn the states into virtual colonies of the Central power. Appointment of governors by the Centre, the manner in which governors have been used to underline domination by the Centre, alteration of state boundaries by the

Centre at its will, the Centre's policy of arrogating to itself many of the functions which rightly belong to the state (the BSF, the CRP, the CISF, the Agricultural Commissions are examples of this), the recent plans of amending the Constitution to enable the Centre to declare emergency in one or more states are points in illustration. It may be noted that the Central Government of the bourgeois-landlord classes, led by the big bourgeoisie, consistently denies autonomy or even greater devolution of financial resources to the states.

Centre-State conflicts between the Centre and Congress governments in the states reflect the crisis and inner contradictions of the ruling classes. There is no way of solving the problem of Centre-State relations so long as the bourgeois-landlord state is not overthrown.

### *Character of the Bureaucracy, Army and Judiciary*

Bureaucracy could be defined as the higher echelons of the government officials who are involved in policymaking and policy implementation in the sense of taking decisions relating to larger issues and who are also privileged in terms of money, status and influence. It is bureaucracy that primarily maintains and operates the other instruments of class power.

The army and police are the final coercive instruments. The recent uses of the army, particularly in West Bengal, where other instruments of coercion failed to put down the democratic struggling masses, is a case in point.

The courts have played a reactionary role in its interpretation and application of the various provisions of the Constitution. Such a conservative or reactionary bias is inherent in the Indian bureaucracy and the judiciary which are but the legacies of the British rule. It is natural for the ruling classes to select the judges of the High Courts and the Supreme Court from amongst the propertied classes. This has ensured a built-in bias in favour of protection of private property rights which is reflected in the various interpretations and judgments affecting fundamental rights relating to private property. At the lower levels even when the judiciary is separated from the executive, this cannot insulate the judiciary from the pressures and influence of the executive and the bureaucracy. The independence of the judiciary is a myth so long as judges are appointed and they have to look to the executive for favour after retirement. Judges have been known to have procured positions for their sons and relatives in the big industrial houses and the government, and they own big landholdings in many cases.

## *Class Character of State Power in India\**

S NAQVI

IT would be readily conceded that the only rational and objective criterion for determining the class character of a given state lies not so much in the form of the constitution or even the fundamental rights, the structure of the governmental machinery or the class origin or party affiliation of the ministers and high officials, as in the nature of the system of property ownership in the means of production and the economic policies pursued by the state.

In the perspective of this criterion and the experience of the post-1947 period, one should unambiguously characterise the Indian State as a bourgeois state which essentially functions in the class interests of the Indian bourgeoisie *as a whole*. Neither the alliance with the feudal and semi-feudal interests, which is very much there, nor collaboration with imperialist powers, which is a growing phenomenon, goes to the extent of basically detracting from the bourgeois character of the state. And for that matter, the conflict between the interests of the big and monopoly bourgeoisie and the middle and small bourgeoisie—which include the newly emerging kulaks in the agrarian sector—popularly called the national or anti-monopoly bourgeoisie, cannot seriously qualify the basic bourgeois character of the Indian State. Similarly, the creation and expansion of the public sector in the economy, the nationalisation of insurance and large banks and state intervention in trade and other services in no way modify the class character of the Indian State.

*\*In the present paper, we are examining current tendencies and by no means positing the existence of a finished, unalloyed capitalist system or the absence of counter-tendencies. It needs also to be stressed that in the vast regions of India, with all their geographical and historical diversities and uneven developments, economic conditions are by no means uniform. Thus, for example, there are pockets where feudal relations are rapidly disappearing while in others, various forms of feudal relations still persist, alongside of the emergence of capitalist, market-oriented agriculture, based more and more on wage-labour.*

Indeed, it is significant that the left parties have all along characterised the economic policies of the Indian Government as representing the capitalist path of economic development, and been demanding the pursuit of a non-capitalist path.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, the bourgeois path inexorably leads to an ever-widening process of concentration and centralisation, resulting in the development of monopolies in one sphere after another, ruining and swallowing up small and middle bourgeois elements. However, at no stage is the small and middle bourgeoisie eliminated as a category since it is in the very nature of the functioning of the system that while some of the existing weaker bourgeois elements disappear, new ones are all the time being born from among the middle peasants, petty traders and so forth, until all land has also been swallowed by the monopolists if such a situation could be conceived.

## II

So far as the respective shares of the bourgeoisie, feudals and semi-feudals in the ownership and control over productive assets and gross output are concerned, our national income statistics with all their inadequacies indicate a perceptible shift from the latter to the former.

There are several ways of testing the validity of this formulation empirically, namely :

1) Confining the control over the gross value of material product of the bourgeoisie (industrial, commercial, financial, banking) to the non-agricultural sector, we find an overall tendency of increase in the share of the former over that of agriculture which, at this level of abstraction, we assume to be out of the bourgeois relationship fold.

2) In the field of agriculture itself, there is evidence of the rich peasants (kulaks)—new and former feudal or semi-feudal landholders—increasing their share of total agricultural output (we are excluding forestry and fisheries, dairies, animal husbandry, poultry, etc from consideration here). Among the rich peasants there has been a constant rise in the proportion of those operating mainly or wholly with wage labour of one type or another producing for the market and utilising improved methods of lower or higher intensity, manual/bullock or semi-mechanical improved tools, or mechanised or semi-mechanised equipment and of course better seeds, fertilisers and insecticides. Thus an increasing proportion of agrarian assets and output is being drawn into the orbit of capitalist relations of production. The tendency is unmistakable though, of course, the extent of this process is a phenomenon which needs to be empirically assessed in order to find out the forms and patterns it assumes and the rate at which it is growing and the impact of forces obstructing the process and a measure of their strength.

## III

What then of the equations between the various sections of the

bourgeoisie, feudal and semi-feudal elements and imperialism? What of the land reforms, ceilings on agricultural holdings, financial and other aids to the small and medium businessmen, promotion of anti-monopoly legislation and the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act and so on? What of the Indian Government's efforts at furthering trade and security alliances with the USSR and other socialist countries, even to the extent they have been implemented? Do these facts in any way qualify the *all bourgeois* character of the state?

#### IV

It is our thesis that all the major economic reforms and policies introduced by the Indian Government(s) since 1947, have been objectively directed towards strengthening and extending the capitalist system in the Indian economy. Notwithstanding the many conflicts (and compromises) among the big and the non-big bourgeoisie and the feudal and semi-feudal elements, bourgeoisie and imperialism, bourgeois and socialist countries, in essence everything is being done to subserve the interests of the bourgeoisie as a class, and capitalism as a system of economic and political power.

Those who tend to see the Indian State as a special case—a unique phenomenon—(of course, no bourgeois state is an exact replica of the developed bourgeois states, just as no two socialist states can be identical, for obvious historical reasons) pointing out the intra-bourgeois conflicts, miss the essential point of bourgeois history outside India. In every non-socialist country developed or underdeveloped, where once a bourgeois class (mercantile, industrial or financial) begins to emerge, these intra-bourgeois contradictions and conflicts have appeared and have been fought out, though always within the orbit of the bourgeois system and along the bourgeois path. Take any country like UK, USA, France or Italy, and we will observe these intra-bourgeois conflicts and struggles. Laws against monopolies, cartels, trusts and restrictive practices are formulated when things come to a head; yet the inexorable law of the capitalism eventually resolves them in the interests of big capitalists with innumerable small bourgeoisie driven to ruin and forced to join the ranks of the proletariat or semi-proletariat.

#### V

Now let us take the case of land reforms in post-1947 India. It had three central objectives, apart from creating an illusion of social justice, namely, (a) achievement of self-sufficiency in foodgrains and industrial crops to provide adequate food supply for industrial labour, cheaper labour cost and sufficient raw materials for agro-based industries, to sell Indian manufactures abroad at competitive prices, while tariff duties and restrictions protected Indian products in the internal market from foreign competition; (b) the creation of a new social base of allies in the agrarian sector, in the form of rich and upper middle farmers freed from parasitical, feudal institutions and imposts, and (c) encouragement

and extension of commercial and banking capital into the agrarian economy forcing the erstwhile dominant feudal interests to cede social and political power to the bourgeois elements.

It is well known by now that by and large these aims are well on the way to realisation and it is also clear as to who has gained from these measures and who are the losers. So far as the poor peasants, sharecroppers and landless peasants, including agricultural labourers, are concerned it is conceded that they are worse off than before the reforms even in the most progressive agrarian economy of Punjab, not to speak of less advanced and backward states. Millions have lost even the tiny plots they cultivated as sub-tenants or tenants and are now mostly operating as sharecroppers or wage labourers under the most insecure and stringent conditions. Millions more are reduced to unemployment or underemployment, many of whom are flocking to cities in the hope of earning a bare livelihood. The enterprising rich and upper middle farmers, former tenants of erstwhile feudal landlords and the old feudal landowners themselves, never had it so good. Secure in their ownership of land, they are assured of cheap and easy credit, minimum taxes, irrigation facilities, fertilisers, insecticides, new hybrid high-yielding seeds and modern imported agricultural equipment. Since 1966-67, they have also been guaranteed purchase by the state at above market prices of their entire surplus produce. The rich and upper middle farmers, thus have been minting gold and expanding their area of operation by acquiring more land and undertaking ancillary industrial activities. While this is happening in the countryside there is growing investment in land made by urban financiers and traders, investment in trade and industrial capital by former landlords and the new rural rich. All in all, it is the bourgeoisie as a class, including the kulak, normally considered part of the national bourgeoisie which has gained most from the agrarian policies hitherto pursued by the Indian Government.

No doubt, we witness occasional outbursts of contradictions between the bourgeoisie and the feudal and semi-feudal interests. However, except for a few rare instances, when the bourgeoisie agrees to offer some concessions to these interests, these conflicts are generally resolved to the advantage of the bourgeoisie. It is these retreats of the feudal interests which create illusions among the small bourgeoisie, rural and urban, regarding the 'radical' character of state policies, especially since the 1969 split in the Congress. In reality, the leaders of the big bourgeoisie, in and outside the governments, at the Centre and in the states, who first appear to encourage the elimination of feudal forms of exploitation in the interest of the toiling peasants and the landless, eventually utilise the agitations and struggles of the mass of the working peasantry for securing further inroads into the rural economy, giving some minor (normally formal) concessions to the toilers, like some legislations whose implementation in reality hardly benefits the masses by the time the laws begin to be formally enforced.

It is necessary here to state that in the context of the extremely uneven economic development in different parts of the country, there are probably still large regions where feudal and semi-feudal relations, in one form or the other, still persist. In such areas, the bourgeoisie and their state have to compromise with the feudal and semi-feudal class interests and make substantial concessions to them even while conflicts burst out occasionally among these allies. The bourgeois state, therefore, frequently comes forward to protect and defend these interests against the struggles of the landless, the poor peasants, tenants and sharecroppers. And wherever capitalist agriculture is not developing rapidly, and therefore the conflict between rich peasants (kulaks) and feudal and semi-feudal elements is not sharp, it is the latter who constitute the social base of the state. Inevitably, to this extent the feudal and semi-feudal elements have a share in state power (army, civil service, ministries, legislatures and so forth). Thus, while the main instrument of state power to be fought is the bourgeois state and its civil, military and judicial forces and the monopolists and the big bourgeoisie who are the principal repositories of bourgeois economic power, in many areas, feudal and semi-feudal interest would constitute the main enemy. Here these interests have their main local and regional social base. The nation-wide unification of the struggle of social revolution at the people's democratic stage by the industrial workers, the middle class employees, the landless peasants, the poor peasants, the lower middle peasants and tenants and sharecroppers, would be necessitated and facilitated by the inevitable unification of the forces of counter-revolution—the monopoly and big bourgeoisie and the feudal and semi-feudal classes. The middle and small bourgeoisie and the small and medium kulaks may get neutralised and even support the struggle, as the revolution gathers momentum and shows signs of success while counter-revolution begins to retreat.

So far as the industrial policy of the government is concerned, the basic role of the public sector has long been recognised as one of investment in lines of production and services, which provide cheap infrastructure for the private sector, in which, due to long gestation and low returns, the bourgeoisie would in any case be and has been disinclined to enter, interested as it was and is, in high profits and quick turnover. And it is on record that the bourgeoisie, including the big monopolies, has on the whole, welcomed this pattern of state investment.

If we were to consider the conflict of interests between the big bourgeoisie and medium and small ones, we would witness the interesting phenomenon that, while the process of ruination of small scale business goes on apace along with the expansion of the national market, by the entry of big business in the rural market competing out the small producer, the two sections, on the whole, pull together through various forms of compromise or concession—howsoever unstable and tenuous—via subsidies, government stores purchase policy, bank credit and so on for the small and medium producers. Much has been made of bank nationalisa-

tion as an anti-monopoly measure. However, it needs to be seen that while the nationalised banks do provide more credit to the small and medium sectors and the kulaks, the big bourgeoisie by no means suffer from shortage of investible resources. Indeed, the newly nationalised banks and other state financial bodies, now underwrite new issues of big enterprises, besides of course the latter being allowed to fully retain their own investible resources through hundred and one tax concessions. The banking bourgeoisie, representing the core of the financial-commercial-industrial-agricultural bourgeois conglomeracy, collected by the grace of the legal system its pound of flesh in the form of handsome compensation in cash with full freedom to profitably employ it in avenues of its own choice. Meanwhile, the poor peasants and shorecroppers are still waiting for bank credits and the strong plea of Ashok Mitra for differential (low) interest rates for these sections has been contemptuously ignored and even ridiculed.

The elections to the central and state legislatures and the thousands of sociological surveys clearly indicate that the two sections of the bourgeoisie, on the whole, pull together as long as the economy does not get into a state of crisis. It is only when depression sets in that the intra-bourgeois conflicts burst up and small splinter groups and parties begin to arise, securing the support of the discontented small and middle bourgeois elements, rural as well as urban. And the regional and linguistic conflicts get intensified precisely at such times, further complicating and confusing the situation and creating an impression of an irreconcilable contradiction between the small and big bourgeoisie, between the bourgeoisie of the advanced regions or sub-regions (like the recent Telāngana embroglio) and of the backward regions, where even the local big bourgeoisie join the fray on behalf of their respective regions, naturally manoeuvring to turn the movement in directions which would secure for themselves the major benefits.

The still-birth of the anti-monopoly measures and restrictions against the entry of big bourgeoisie in certain sectors, said to be reserved for small and medium bourgeoisie, is too well known by now to need emphasis. And yet, in the 1971 parliamentary elections, the small and middle bourgeoisie, including the kulaks, no less than the big bourgeoisie gave all their support to Mrs Gandhi's candidates. The 1972 Assembly elections were again symptomatic of this unity of all bourgeois elements.

Again, the expansion of trade and mutual aid treaties with socialist countries directly in the interests of the bourgeoisie as a class since it enables the bourgeoisie to secure infrastructure projects at concessional rates denied to it by the imperialist countries and provides an expanding market for its products, less and less bought by the imperialist countries. Here too, the two sections of the bourgeoisie are found supporting the government policies as serving national interests, meaning thereby the interests of both the sections of the bourgeoisie, apart from

the gain they get by forcing the imperialist countries in this way to compete with the socialist countries.

## VI

One aspect of our problem remains. Does the bourgeoisie share state power with the feudal and semi-feudal interests? First, theoretically it is possible to visualise such a situation and certain, though rare, historical instances could be cited in this connection. However, such a situation has always been and is bound inevitably to be temporary, short-lived and uneasy, since once the capitalist relations have begun to grow in agriculture and assume increasing control of agrarian productive assets, the state power would gradually pass into the hands of the bourgeoisie serving their class interests and subverting the interests of all other classes, including the feudal and semi-feudal ones. The conflict that would arise between the feudals and capitalists for state and economic power may, under varying conditions, end in one of the following ways:

- a) The bourgeoisie may secure the alliance of anti-feudal elements and completely eliminate feudal influence over state power;
- b) The feudal elements, in alliance with anti-capitalist elements, internal and foreign (imperialist) may overthrow the capitalists and recapture full control (direct for itself, or indirect as the subservient ally of imperialism) of the state;
- c) The bourgeoisie forces feudal interests to:
  - i) accept the suzerainty of the bourgeoisie and
  - ii) agree to be content with certain minor concessions regarding formal dignity and honours, land and assets, etc, and jobs and positions in the government and
  - iii) invest part of their funds and revenues in commercial, industrial or servicing enterprises or in cultivation of land through wage labour, at least on part of their holdings.

Thus, while economically capitalism begins and acquires more, wider and deeper control, politically it becomes dominant. It is the variant (c) which has eventually operated in India, though the second was tried by the feudal interests for along time. Hence, it should be clear that the State in India is a bourgeois state and the feudal and semi-feudal interests, though receiving shares of jobs and positions as well as retaining and adding to their property and assets are subservient to the bourgeoisie, though the system works more and more in the interests of the monopoly and big bourgeoisie while occasional crumbs are thrown to the small and middle bourgeoisie to create illusions among them and to rally their support for suppressing popular revolts.

## VII

The foregoing by no means implies that the contradictions between the big bourgeoisie and the small and medium ones are not growing and

that the former would always be able to solve the conflicts through temporising compromise and partial concessions and keep the latter tagged on to its own chariot wheel. Nor does it mean that the battle of the working class and the toiling peasants and the working middle classes would always be necessarily opposed by the small and medium businessmen. All that it does imply is that in normal conditions, the big bourgeoisie and the bourgeois state can continue to soften and partially solve this contradiction through concessions and compromises and continue to breed illusions among the other sections. It would be only when the political crisis matures in the wake of the economic showdown that conflicts would sharpen beyond concessions and when the proletariat and the working peasantry and their allies move forward to the offensive in their struggle for political power, that the small bourgeoisie would begin to see that their interest lies in supporting this struggle, or at least remaining neutral. And then alone the state facing the assault of the proletariat and toiling peasants and their allies would really be reduced to the level of the state of the big and monopoly bourgeoisie.<sup>2</sup> Of course the role the non-monopoly and non-big bourgeoisie would eventually play, once the socialist transformation begins, with the capture of the state power by the urban and rural proletarians and semi-proletarians and their allies, is another matter.

It is hoped that the position taken in the present paper would not be equated with the all too familiar Trotskyite position of refusal to recognise stages of revolution, each with its own pattern of class alignments.

<sup>1</sup> This reference should by no means be taken to imply that the present writer accepts the recently coined and popularised concept of the non-capitalist path.

<sup>2</sup> Indeed the monopoly bourgeoisie may, at this stage be also forced to seek a closer alliance with feudal and semi-feudal interests and imperialism and make substantial concessions to them, including share in state power and policies.

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Review Article*

### *The Educational Thought of Paulo Freire*

PAULO FREIRE, *PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED*, Herder and Herder, New York 1972, pp 186, \$ 2.95.

OUR educational system is a favourite and easy target of criticism of everyone from the planners to the students. All are agreed that Macaulay is the original sinner, but on the question of redemption there is wide divergence of views. As we do not take the socialist or egalitarian rhetoric of the present ruling elite seriously our criticism is not that the planners have signally failed to effect reforms to suit the requirements of the socialist transformation of our social system. However, we are within our rights to point out that the measures taken by the government and the planners in the educational field have fulfilled none of their declared objectives and that the rate of disintegration of the educational system keeps pace with the development of the socio-economic crisis in the country. Despite the announcements of grandiose schemes and declarations of pious intentions it is not difficult to identify a near total despair in the perorations of our educational experts. To justify their reputation and membership of various commissions they periodically come out with criticism, suggestions and reform proposals. By conviction or training they are not inclined to ask the basic socio-political questions regarding the class aims of the educational system. Hence, apart from such eccentric schemes like Basic Education they have nothing to offer other than plans for vocational training, work-oriented education, restrictive admissions, examination reforms and the like.

It is too much to hope that Paulo Freire's educational thought will stimulate the fuddled brains of the decision-makers in the Indian educational field. Freire is too irreverent of the bourgeois establishment everywhere. He is a little too subversive. But all those interested in radicalising our masses through education will find Freire's book strengthening their commitment to the revolution and refreshing their ideas

about a truly humanising and liberating educational programme.

Paulo Freire was born in Recife in 1921. The harrowing experiences of his family during the depression period in the early thirties profoundly affected his outlook. Impoverishment, malnutrition, late schooling and the wretched conditions of his compatriots made him seek a way out of the rut in which the Brazilian masses found themselves. He found the way in a total revolution by the oppressed. One of the effective means of awakening revolutionary consciousness among them was through radical adult literacy campaigns. While he was Professor of History and Philosophy of Education at the University of Recife, Freire evolved his method of teaching during the course of extensive experiments among illiterates. His participation in the Movement of Popular Culture in Recife convinced him that it was possible to make the masses critically aware of their social situation through literacy campaigns. The successful example of Cuba after the Revolution, in wiping out illiteracy through literacy campaigns influenced the thinking of the educationists of the then liberal populist Brazilian Government. In 1963 the Brazilian Government sought the co-operation of Freire in organising a nation-wide literacy campaign enlisting the services of thousands of volunteers. The radical orientation of Freire's method naturally provoked opposition in conservative circles. In Brazil the illiterates could not vote and a campaign aimed at making them literate as well as radical was obviously a threat to the reactionary forces. And when the coup leaders took over in 1964 the campaign was wound up and Freire was arrested and jailed along with thousands of progressives. When released Freire was exiled. He went to Chile where he got encouraging response from militant educational workers and worked in UNESCO sponsored schemes. He was also associated with the Harvard School of Education. Currently he is a Special Consultant to the Office of Education of the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

The most noteworthy aspect of Freire's method is that it is not just another way of enabling illiterates to read and write but a radical way of changing people's perception of reality. Freire employs many of the basic insights of Marxism, but he has also drawn upon the writing of Husserl, Hegel, Buber, Niebuhr, Sartre and Fromm. His general philosophical position seems to be an amalgam of Marxism and Christian and humanist schools of Existentialism. This has made his critics call him an eclectic and accuse him of wanting in philosophical rigour.

The key word in Freire's thought is *conscientization*. It is an atrocious word and though Freire disclaims the responsibility of coining it, it is through his writings that the word has gained its present wide currency in educational circles. Conscientization is a political-educational process which enables the masses to overcome "false consciousness", to realise their real situation in society and to take part in changing society in the capacity of subjects. In other words it is a process of gaining awareness of reality in order to transform it consciously. Obviously this has radical political implications. It is all again Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach.

In fact, what distinguishes Freire's methods from so many bourgeois liberal methods of education, is precisely the practical revolutionary dimension he imparts to it. He provides the answer not only to the question how a people of an underdeveloped country can become literate but also to the question why they should learn to read and write. To him literacy is an essential ingredient of the process of the realisation of men's true vocation, that is, the humanisation of man as subject of history. Such a conception makes the method an efficient weapon in the hands of revolutionary movements, and for the same reason it is useless and even dangerous for the reactionary forces defending the *status quo*. Rightists too evolve forms of cultural action including literacy campaigns, but their ultimate objective is to strengthen their domination over the masses and to domesticate them so that they will not be prompted to ask inconvenient questions regarding the legitimacy of oppression.

In a class society the masses are treated as 'objects', 'things' to be managed, directed and manipulated by the oppressors :

Any situation in which 'A' objectively exploits 'B' or hinders his pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression. Such a situation in itself constitutes violence, even when sweetened by false generosity because it interferes with man's ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human (pp 40-41).

This oppressive violence imposes a 'culture of silence' on the masses. It may assume the form of crude and direct use of force or the sweet reasonableness of bourgeois democracy. But the result is the same : the prevention of emergence of the masses from their submerged condition to assert their right to participate in the making of history. In a situation of oppressive violence the masses are "prohibited from being"—they are forced to be beings-for-others. Freire's method is aimed at breaking down this 'culture of silence' by demythologising reality. It requires an active attitude on the part of the learners. In oppressive societies the teacher-taught relation is one of domination. Learning-teaching should be a co-operative dialectical process in which the teacher while teaching learns from the taught and the taught while learning teach the educators. In Freire's view learning to read and write constitutes an act of knowing and establishing a creative relationship with the world.

Learning to read and write ought to be an opportunity for men to to know what *speaking the word* really means : a human act implying reflection and action. As such it is a primordial human right and not the privilege of a few. Speaking the word is not a true act if it is not at the same time associated with the right of self-expression and world-expression, of creating and re-creating, of deciding and choosing and ultimately participating in society's historical process.<sup>1</sup>

Freire's criticism of the conventional educational system in metropolitan and colonial societies is shared by many. He characterises it as the 'banking' method because here education is conceived as an act of 'depositing'. Students are containers or receptacles to be filled in by

teachers. The students' task is to store the deposits and recall when required. Freire's 'banking' concept corresponds to what Sartre calls the 'digestive' or nutritive concept of education in which knowledge is 'fed' by the teacher to the students to fill them out. One may point out that the conception of knowledge as food of the spirit is fairly ingrained in common imagination. A terse expression of this idea is found in Francis Bacon: "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." Freire counterposes his problem-posing method to the banking method. If the banking method suits the manipulative purposes of an oppressor class the former method enables the masses to creatively intervene in reality.

In problem-posing education, men develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation. . . . In sum: banking theory and practice, as immobilising and fixating forces fail to acknowledge men as historical beings; problem-posing theory and practice take man's historicity as their starting point (p 70-71).

The principal mode in which the problem-posing education is carried out is in "dialogue". The concept of "dialogue", with its Christian existentialist associations, is vital to the understanding of Freire's philosophy of education. In this view, dialogue is an encounter between men in order to transform the world. This kind of dialogue obviously cannot exist between the oppressed and the oppressors. It is a relation between the educator and the educated in which the conventional virtues like love, humanity, hope and faith have a definite place. According to Freire sometimes revolutionary leaders commit the mistake of imitating the tactics of the oppressors in order to outwit them. He warns that it would be a self-defeating enterprise. Such leaders employ the banking line of planning the programme content. They are not able to resist the manipulative onslaught of the ruling class.

In a situation of manipulation, the Left is almost always tempted by a "quick return to power", forgets the necessity of joining with the oppressed to forge an organisation, and strays into an impossible "dialogue" with the dominant elites. It ends by being manipulated by these elites, and not infrequently itself falls into an elitist game, which it calls "realism" (p 146).

The major difficulty in Freire's literacy method is that it cannot be smoothly implemented in pre-revolutionary societies. Most of the Third World countries are ruled by elites who reproduce themselves in the image of the metropolitan elites despite their socialist professions. They may welcome Freire and arrange for seminars; but it is doubtful whether he will be given chances to practise it. Freire's method has a permanent significance in the sphere of human self-liberation, both in the pre-revolutionary period and in the post-revolutionary situation. It is a continuing cultural revolution and as such is aimed at preventing the

formation of petrified bureaucracies after the successful completion of the political revolutionary task of establishing the dictatorship of the oppressed. To overcome the difficulty Freire makes a "distinction between *systematic education* which can only be changed by political power, and educational projects, which should be carried out *with* the oppressed in the process of organising them" (p 40). Indian politics since Independence, has become too much electoralised in the sense that periodical elections have become the focus around which all political forces, including the Left, organise their political activities. However desirable and necessary it may be for the bourgeoisie, this reduction of politics to elections is more likely to harm the Left than benefit it. Those who aim at a total revolution not merely a ministerial change, should "put politics in command" in every field of popular activity and not reduce politics to electioneering. To treat human beings as just so many thousands of voters is to treat them as objects for manipulation. It goes without saying that adult literacy campaigns by themselves cannot revolutionise the masses, however radical the teaching methods may be. But it is possible for groups of the Left to launch literacy campaigns among the illiterates as part of their revolutionary activity. Only on the basis of dedicated and sustained work with the masses can we formulate a theory adequate for our educational purposes. But the revolutionary educators who undertake pedagogical work among our adult illiterates will find Freire's ideas stimulating and invigorating.

<sup>1</sup> Paulo Freire, "Cultural Action for Freedom", *Harvard Educational Review*, 1970, p 12.

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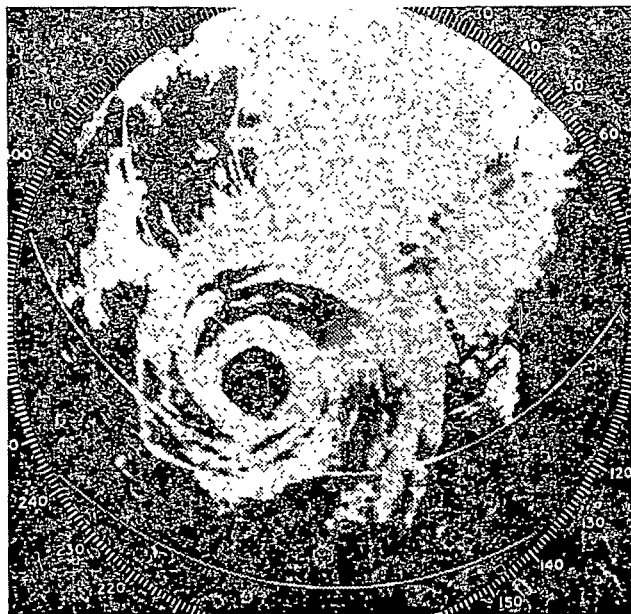
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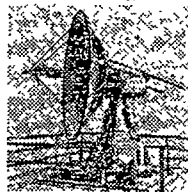
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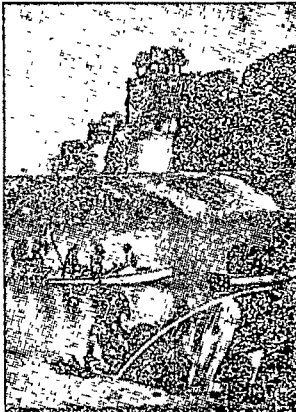
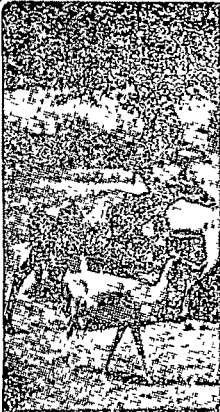
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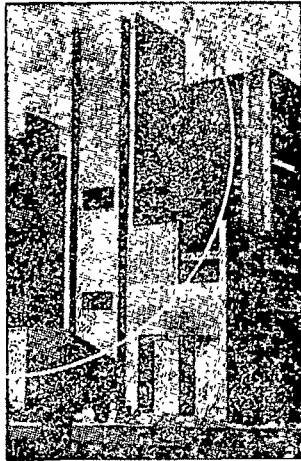
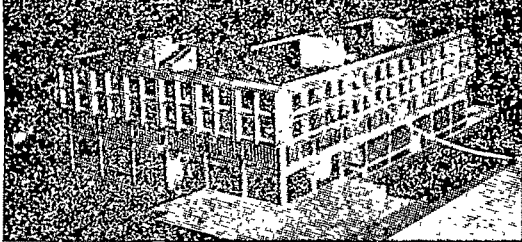
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and not necessarily of the editors or of the Indian School of Social Sciences.*

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BOB ROWTHORN

*Neoclassical Economics and its Critics:  
A Marxist View*

THIS article discusses the system of thought known as neo-classical economics, the criticisms made of this system by the neo-Ricardian school, and finally, the relationship of neo-Ricardianism to Marxism.<sup>1</sup> The treatment of neoclassical and neo-Ricardian economics has been kept deliberately general, in order to keep the argument clear and avoid confusion. Only the section dealing with Marx provides detailed references and quotations, as it seemed necessary to give evidence for what might seem an unconventional interpretation of his writing.

*Vulgar Economy*

Academic economics in the capitalist world is in a state of confusion as the dominant system of thought—neoclassical economics—comes under attack. Despite the elaborate mathematical reformulations it has undergone in recent years, this kind of economics differs very little in its fundamentals from what Marx, a century or more ago, contemptuously described as ‘vulgar economy’—the systematisation of what is immediately visible in the sphere of market relations: individual preferences, prices and exchange. Throughout this paper, therefore, the terms ‘vulgar economy’ and ‘neoclassical economics’ will be used interchangeably.

Vulgar economy can be characterised in the most general terms as follows.<sup>2</sup> In the first place, it is *individualist*, and *subjectivist*, seeing society as a collection of individuals whose nature is, for analytical purposes, assumed to be given or predetermined, quite independently of the social phenomena under consideration. Its object is to explain these social phenomena by relating them to the psychological characteristics of the given individuals and the initial situation in which they find themselves. In vulgar economy the individual plays a precisely analogous role to the atom in Newtonian mechanics. Just as Newtonian mechanics sees material reality as the interaction of unvarying or eternal atoms, so does vulgar economy see social reality as the interaction of individuals whose natures are unvarying or eternal. Society is explained in terms of the individual, rather than the individual in terms of society. This stands in sharp contrast to the view of Marxists and such non-Marxists as Durkheim who see the individual as the product of society and who seek to explain social phenomena in terms of social laws which do not derive from the individual. Indeed, in Marx's work the individual appears merely as the representative or bearer *Träger* of specific social relations. The accumulation of capital, for example, is not seen as the result of capitalist greed or subjective time-preference, but as an expression of the immanent laws of capitalist development, which can be understood without any reference to the subjective characteristics of the individual capitalist.

In the second place vulgar economy suffers from what might be described as *naturalism*. Since even the most superficial description of what are generally regarded as economic phenomena cannot escape the fact that things are produced, production must somehow or other be included within the scope of vulgar economy. The way in which production is treated, however, is remarkably similar to the way in which the individual is treated. Just as the individual is assumed to be a-social, so too is production. Instead of seeing production as a social process in which human beings combine together within a specific framework of social relations, vulgar economy sees production as an a-social or natural process in which inputs of labour, land and means of production, misleadingly described as capital, are mysteriously transformed into outputs of material and non-material goods.

Insofar as property relations enter into this picture, they relate not to the labour process, or what Marx called the appropriation of nature, but to the distribution process, or what Marx called the appropriation of the product. Thus, when Debreu talks of a private ownership economy he is referring, not to the fact that the capitalist employs the worker and organises production, but to the fact that some people have a claim to part of the social product, deriving from their 'ownership' of the means of production.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, vulgar economy is characterised by the primacy it accords to market phenomena or *exchange*. This is hardly surprising. Given the

fact that society is seen as an agglomeration of individuals whose nature is given, who do not combine together in a social production process and whose only link with each other is through the buying and selling of commodities, market phenomena must inevitably assume primary position.

Thus, vulgar economy or neoclassical economics is characterised by *subjective individualism*, *naturalism* and the primacy it awards to *exchange*. The effects of vulgar economy have been twofold: at a scientific level it has inhibited, if not entirely prevented, serious study of the capitalist mode of production and the 'economic law of motion of modern society'; and at an ideological level it has provided a moral justification of the existing social order.

These two effects, although related to each other, are analytically distinct and it would be a mistake to assume that every neoclassical economist is an apologist for the capitalist system. The individual practitioner of neoclassical economics may be motivated by the purest spirit of scientific curiosity or may even be a socialist who finds the present social order morally repugnant. This fact does not, however, alter the objective effects of neoclassical economics as a system of thought. No matter what the aspirations of its more progressive practitioners, the conceptual framework and starting point of neoclassical economics render virtually impossible a scientific analysis of the capitalist or any other mode of production. Once these concepts and starting points are accepted the main lines of analytical development are predetermined, and attempts to modify this development in the name of 'greater realism' take on an inevitably eclectic character. Genuine scientific advance becomes possible only to the extent that the original system of thought is, implicitly, or explicitly, abandoned. To use Bachelard's expression, neoclassical economics constitutes an 'epistemological obstacle' whose significant effect on a scientific plane is simply to inhibit the development of an authentic science of modes of production.<sup>4</sup> Despite a formidable mathematical apparatus, the contribution of neoclassical economics to such a *social* science has been negligible. Of course, the mathematical methods found in modern neoclassical economics have been of great importance in such fields as linear programming, where the aim is to develop the science of rational choice or, as it has been called, 'praxiology'. But the fact that neoclassical economics and praxiology share the same mathematical methods and, within limits, the same conceptual framework, does not in any way validate the pretensions of neoclassical economics, when it claims to be the general starting point from which a science of the capitalist mode of production should begin. The relationship between these two systems of thought may be polemically compared to that between astrology and astronomy, which share the same vocabulary and, within limits, the same concepts. But this in no way validates astrology as a science which enables us to understand human destiny.

Although useful as a system of thought serving to justify the capi-

talist mode of production and inhibit fundamental inquiry into its functioning, neoclassical economics is incapable of handling the problems of social control and organisation confronting capitalist enterprises or the state. As a result, there has arisen a series of practical disciplines, some of which reject certain elements of neoclassical theory, and others of which base themselves pragmatically upon observed statistical regularities, whose explanation is only tenuously related to this theory. Keynesianism, for example, partially rejects individualism, seeking, although not always finding, laws which cannot be directly deduced from the behaviour of individuals with given preferences and perceptions—uncertainty, expectations and their formation play a central role in this approach. Scientific management, to take another example, rejects the notion of production as a natural process and, within the confines laid down by bourgeois property relations, examines the rational (profitable) organisation of the labour process and control of the workforce. What all of these practical disciplines have in common, however, is the lack of any grand vision comparable in scope to that of vulgar economy, being all more or less eclectic in approach. Despite the mushrooming of applied economics and related disciplines in recent years, vulgar economy remains the dominant, indeed to all intents and purposes the only, general system of thought within the world of academic economics. At one time, Keynesianism appeared capable of providing an alternative, but after twenty five years of successful application it has been reduced to the status of a practical discipline and provides no real challenge to vulgar economy. Indeed a watered-down version of Keynesianism has been incorporated into what Samuelson has called 'the grand neo-classical synthesis'.

Vulgar economy achieves its ideological impact in two distinct ways: through the picture of the world given by its apparently neutral variants, and through the openly apologetic use made of certain of its findings. The apparently neutral variants analyse the capitalist system as if it were an inherently stable and smoothly self-regulating mechanism. Unemployment, crises, uneven development and similar negative features of the system are regarded as deviations from 'equilibrium', or as secondary phenomena and their existence is *for analytical purposes* ascribed to 'frictions' or 'imperfections', such as monopoly or imperfect information. Quite apart from its inhibiting effect on scientific work, such an approach has direct political implications. In consistently treating such negative features as deviations from equilibrium or as secondary phenomena, vulgar economy assumes that they play no fundamental role in the capitalist system. It is but a short step to conclude that they can be eliminated by the introduction of more competition, better information or some other piecemeal change designed to remove imperfections in an otherwise perfect mechanism.

Apologetic uses of vulgar economy frequently derive from its emphasis on the correspondence between the subjective preferences of individual participants and the technical configuration of the economy. In

simpler versions the equilibrium conditions, expressing this correspondence, take the form of a series of equalities between the 'subjective' rates of substitution of one good for another and the corresponding 'objective' or technical rates of substitution. In more sophisticated versions certain of these equalities are replaced by inequalities, to allow for the possibility of boundaries, corners or other irregularities. Since apologetic uses rely largely upon simpler versions of the theory, let us assume that all equilibrium conditions take the form of equalities. The argument which follows can be modified to cover the case of inequalities.

The apologetic possibilities of the above correspondence can be seen with the aid of a simple example. Suppose the technology is such that the use of 1 additional unit of a good, say corn, as an input to the production process will, if efficiently utilised, cause the output of the same good in the following year to rise by  $1 + X$  units, all other inputs and outputs remaining constant—in the language of vulgar economy  $X$  is the 'marginal product' of corn. Under the assumed conditions, any individual who reduces his current corn consumption by 1 unit can, if he wishes, receive in return an amount of corn in the following year equal to  $1 + X$  units. In other words the 'corn rate of interest', measuring the return in terms of corn to the individual saver, is equal to the marginal product of corn.

Now, since the system is in equilibrium, there can be no individual consuming corn who would prefer  $1 + X$  units in the following year to 1 unit in the current year, for, should such an individual exist, he would make use of the possibility of substitution offered by the corn rate of interest, reducing his current consumption, and the configuration of the economy would change, contrary to the assumption that the system is in equilibrium. Indeed, since the equilibrium conditions are assumed to be equalities, one can go further and say that every single individual, without exception, will be just at the margin of choice, just indifferent between the consumption of one unit of corn in the given year and  $1 + X$  units in the following year. If he gives up the consumption of an additional unit of corn he will require exactly  $1 + X$  units in the following year to restore him to his original level of satisfaction. Any less and he will be worse off, any more and he will be better off. In the language of vulgar economy,  $X$  is his 'subjective rate of time-preference' in the consumption of corn, and is taken to be a measure of the subjective loss he experiences when postponing the consumption of corn.

Thus, provided the equilibrium conditions take the form of equalities, and we consider only changes in the production and consumption of a single commodity, which we also take as numeraire, we find that *marginal products, rates of interest, and subjective rates of time-preference* are all equal.

Now, although these equalities are unlikely to hold in practice, their assertion does not of itself constitute an open apology for the capitalist system. To convert them into such an apology something more is needed,

and this is provided by the manner in which the various terms are interpreted in apologetic writing. The postponement of consumption is described as a *sacrifice* to be measured by the relevant subjective rate of time-preference, the receipt of extra commodities is described as a *reward* to be measured by the relevant rate of interest, and finally marginal products are described as the *marginal contribution to production* of capital in the particular form it happens to be. With this terminology the above equalities can be re-expressed as : the saver receives a reward in the form of interest, proportional both to his sacrifice and to the marginal contribution of his capital to production.

Even when equilibrium conditions take the form of inequalities rather than equalities, this apologetic terminology can be used. Interest remains the reward for sacrifice or abstinence, and it is still related although not necessarily proportional, to sacrifice involved, and the marginal contribution of capital to production.

More generally, the various categories of income are described as rewards for various kinds of sacrifice, each of which provides a necessary contribution to production : the capitalist foregoes the consumption of his capital, receiving interest (or profit) as his reward; the landlord foregoes the use of his land, receiving rent as his reward; and, finally, the worker foregoes his leisure, receiving wages as his reward. Having described the situation in this way, it is but a short step to seeing the relationship between the capitalist, the landlord and the worker as an essentially *harmonious* one, in which each makes his distinct contribution to production, and receives his appropriate award. Marx expressed this very clearly in the following rather lengthy passage :

This, moreover, renders a substantial service to apologetics. For (in the formula :) land-rent, capital-interest, labour-wages, for example, the different forms of surplus-value and configurations of capitalist production do not confront one another as alienated forms, but as heterogeneous and independent forms, merely different from one another but *not antagonistic*. The different revenues are derived from quite different sources, one from land, the second from capital and the third from labour. Thus they do not stand in any hostile connection to one another because they have no inner connection whatsoever. If they nevertheless work together in production, then it is a harmonious action, an expression of harmony, as, for example, the peasant, the ox, the plough and the land in agriculture, in the real labour process, work together *harmoniously* despite their dissimilarities. Insofar as there is any contradiction between them, it arises merely from competition as to which of the agents shall get more of the value they have jointly created. Even if this occasionally brings them to blows, nevertheless the outcome of this competition between land, capital and labour finally shows that, although they quarrel with one another over the division, their rivalry tends to increase the value of the product to such an extent that each receives a larger piece, so that

their competition, which spurs them on, is merely the expression of their harmony.<sup>5</sup>

Note the double harmony between the factors—in production they co-operate, and in distribution their competitive struggle is merely the manifestation of a deeper community of interest.

This harmony of interest is most simply expressed in popular versions of vulgar economy based upon the marginal productivity theory associated with the so-called aggregate production function. In this theory it is assumed that commodities can be reduced to a common standard in such a way that, for analytical purposes, the existence of many different commodities can be ignored and, therefore, income distribution, equilibrium and other features of the system can be analysed as though there existed only one homogeneous commodity, such as the corn we used in the above example. This commodity appears both as an input, where it is called *capital*, and as an output, where it is called *income*. Inputs are transformed into outputs by means of a *production function*, which determines the amount of output produced with given inputs of land, labour and capital.

There are a number of reasons for the popularity of this theory. It is simple, being suitable for teaching and more openly propagandist purposes, lending itself readily to diagrammatic exposition. Moreover, although simple, it purports to be based upon the more complex 'general equilibrium' theory, in which an unlimited number of commodities can appear. Indeed, until recently, it was claimed that nothing significant was lost in the transition from the multi-commodity world of general equilibrium to the single commodity world of the aggregate production function. Finally, the apparent success of the theory in practical application has been an important factor in its popularity. A whole range of supposedly scientific work has been based on the aggregate production function, in particular that of Solow, Denison and others dealing with the causes of economic growth and the contribution of non-material inputs to production.

When dealing with questions of equilibrium and income distribution, certain assumptions are usually made about the shape of the aggregate production functions and the preferences of individuals. The production function, for example, is assumed to exhibit constant returns to scale and uniformly diminishing marginal products with respect to the three factors land, labour and capital. Provided the preferences of the participants display certain well-known properties, these assumptions will be sufficient to ensure that corresponding to each initial endowment, specifying the resources possessed by each individual participant, there will be a unique equilibrium position. In this position every factor is rewarded according to its contribution to production, which is, in turn, equal to the subjective sacrifice the owner of a factor makes when he allows his factor to be used for production rather than consumption.

It also follows from the conventional aggregate theory that in a

competitive economy the working class cannot improve its collective position by organising at the economic level to raise wages, improve conditions, or control the production process. According to this theory, all such organisation will cause some kind of inefficiency, in the form of either the underemployment or misallocation of some factor.<sup>6</sup> Even where one group of workers does improve its position by organisation it can only be at the expense of other workers, who will be forced either to accept lower wages or worse conditions, or else lose their jobs.

This does not mean that workers cannot redistribute income towards themselves. What it does mean, however, is that such redistribution should be achieved through taxation, preferably lump-sum so that marginal equalities are not disturbed. Taxes may be levied on either income or wealth.

Now, taxes cannot be changed through the economic struggle of workers against their own employer or a group of employers. In this theory, therefore, workers have no real need to organise themselves at the work-place level, except perhaps to help the competitive process by putting pressure on the backward employer. If they must organise, workers should do so at the political level, perhaps even forming their own political party to fight for their interests.

Superficially, this view appears consistent with a militant class politics—workers could, after all, use their party to press for the most radical changes. Its real content, however, is quite the opposite. The basis of any class politics is the day to day struggle of the worker at his place of work, against his employer. Only in this way, by spreading and unifying such struggles, do workers learn to act as a class. Without such a foundation, working class politics, no matter what their beginning, degenerate to a point where the working class ceases to act as a class. To the extent that he remains politically active, the worker then fights, not as a member of his class, but as an individual, as a *citizen*. Thus, no matter how radical its slogans, the practical content of a theory which argues that all changes should be effected by means of taxation and property redistribution, is ultimately the political participation of the worker as an individual citizen and the dissolution of the working class on an organisational level. In a nutshell, workers must abandon class struggle and devote themselves to bourgeois politics.

It follows quite naturally that many radical exponents of marginal productivity theory, who advocate a drastic redistribution of wealth and income through taxation, should at the same time be bitter opponents of trade unionism and all other kinds of working class struggle outside of the traditional framework of bourgeois politics. Thus, bourgeois reformers can in one breath expose and condemn widespread poverty and unequal distribution of property, advocating redistribution to establish a property-owning democracy, and, in the next breath, rant against the trade union movement as the fundamental cause of present economic ills.

More conservative exponents of marginal productivity theory, of

course, do not even go, this far. For them the existing distribution of property is sacrosanct, representing the reward for past effort. If workers want property they should save! However, amongst academic economists this view is no longer very fashionable, and the mainstream opinion is that property and income should be redistributed via the means offered by the bourgeois political process—taxation. Naturally, redistribution must not go to the point where it destroys 'incentives', nor must state intervention be so drastic that it threatens individual 'freedom'. Moreover, even if few academic economists still believe that neoclassical economics provides a complete justification for the existing state of affairs, there can be no doubt that this kind of economics continues to legitimate reactionary views which remain fashionable in the wider society. In providing an apparently scientific basis for these views, neoclassical economics continues to exert a reactionary influence. From a scientific point of view, of course, the main objection to this kind of economics centres around its function as an epistemological obstacle, inhibiting fruitful scientific study of the capitalist and other modes of production.

#### *The Neo-Ricardians*

Vulgar economy has been severely criticised by a school of economists, who are best described as neo-Ricardians, as much of their work takes the form of a more or less conscious return to the method if not the exact propositions of Ricardo.<sup>7</sup> They have also been called the Cambridge or Anglo-Italian school. The main characteristics of the economists of this school are their rejection of subjective individualism, of supply and demand as determinants of income distribution and the explicit inclusion of economic classes in their analysis. From this position they have undertaken an *immanent* critique of vulgar economy, showing that many of its central propositions are not consistent with its own assumptions, and in particular that marginal productivity theory based on the aggregate production function cannot be derived from the general equilibrium system.

The starting point of their critique is the observation that means of production in a capitalist economy have a dual nature. On the one hand they are physical objects and as such their use in the production process leads to the creation of greater output. On the other hand, they are the property of certain individuals, and as such their ownership entitles these individuals to a certain portion of the total product. As physical objects, means of production, or capital as they are called, cannot be reduced to any economically meaningful common standard. Of course, they could be measured by their weight, volume or some other physical attribute, but such a reduction would be irrelevant to the study of such questions as income distribution or equilibrium. As property, however, means of production can be reduced to a common standard, namely their price or, as the neo-Ricardians misleadingly say, their value.

This opposition can be expressed in Marxist terminology by saying

that capital is both a heterogeneous collection of use-values and a homogeneous collection of exchange values. With this distinction in mind, the neo-Ricardians show that, in the marginal productivity theory based on the aggregate production function, the reduction of all commodities to a common standard must be done on the basis of exchange values, rather than weight, volume or any other physical attribute. Now, as the rate of profit varies, exchange values will generally alter and, as a result, the exchange value or price of any given collection of commodities may alter. In other words, the reduction of commodities to a common standard depends on the rate of profit. It is not, therefore, generally possible to perform this reduction before the rate of profit is known.

This result is used by the neo-Ricardians to discredit the aggregate production function, which vulgar economists supposed could be constructed from technological data alone, and which possessed the property that 'capital' per man was inversely related to the rate of profit. The neo-Ricardians show that it may be impossible to order production techniques according to their 'capital intensity'—the exchange value of capital per man. One technique may be more capital intensive than another at both high and low rates of profit, yet be less capital intensive at intermediate rates of profit. Under these circumstances, there can be no monotonic relationship between capital intensity, and rate of profit, or for that matter, between capital intensity and the wage rate. Associated with this is the famous 'reswitching paradox'. Capitalists may prefer one technique when the rate of profit is low, prefer another technique at intermediate rates of profit, and finally at high rates of profit they may once again prefer the original technique. At both high and low rates of profit, therefore, capitalists choose the same technique, but at intermediate rates they choose another. More generally, it may happen that, even though the required monotonic relationship exists, it is 'perverse', with capital intensity rising as the rate of profit rises. Significantly, these conclusions of the neo-Ricardians are not mere curiosa, for reswitching or perverse relationships may occur under quite plausible assumptions.

Finally, the neo-Ricardians have stressed the already known fact that if capital is interpreted as a homogeneous fund of exchange value, the marginal product of capital may not be equal to the rate of profit or interest, even though all the necessary continuity and other conditions of the simpler versions of general equilibrium theory are satisfied.<sup>8</sup>

These achievements of the neo-Ricardian school are real and substantial, and ought not to be underestimated. They amount to a complete demolition of the aggregate production function and marginal productivity theory based on it. As a result vulgar economy, in so far as it retains any scientific pretensions, is now forced to rely upon general equilibrium theory. This theory is far less suitable for teaching and propagandist purposes than the old aggregate theory. Moreover, stressing as it does the dependence of everything on everything else, general equilibrium theory

has the disadvantage of appearing vacuous and irrelevant to all but the most committed of observers. Finally, this theory is unable, except under the most restrictive assumptions, to show that equilibrium is unique. When there exists more than one equilibrium, it is quite possible to maintain that working class struggle at the economic level could shift the system from one equilibrium to another, thereby improving the position of the working class as a whole. Thus, in contrast to its discredited aggregate version, general equilibrium theory is less deterministic in its view of the capitalist system.

Having listed the achievements of the neo-Ricardian school, perhaps I should say something about the more exaggerated claims made by some of its adherents.

The work of Sraffa has not proved that the distribution of income is independent of supply and demand. By their nature, supply and demand can only take effect in a situation where there exists the possibility of variation in either production, consumption, or the supply of labour. In Sraffa's system such variations are explicitly excluded, as the author's stated objective is to study properties of the economy which do not depend on variations other than those of prices, wages and the rate of profit. As a result, supply and demand play no role in Sraffa's system. To conclude from this, however, that supply and demand play no role in the real world is to make the most elementary error. It is to confuse the world, as we think about it, with the world as it really is, or, if you like, to confuse the object of knowledge with the real object. The fact that Sraffa, with good reason, chose to hold production, consumption, and the supply of labour constant in his analysis, says nothing whatsoever about how these elements behave in reality. If, in reality, production, consumption or the supply of labour alter in response to changes in the wage rate or rate of profit, then it is conceivable that supply and demand may determine the level at which the actual wage or profit rate settles.

Under these circumstances, the correct scientific procedure is not to deny that supply and demand may exert such an influence, but to seek for the fundamental laws of which supply and demand are merely a manifestation. Marx, a bitter opponent of vulgar economy, admitted that supply and demand had a proximate effect on wages when he said :

As to the *limits* of the *value of labour*, its actual settlement always depends upon supply and demand, I mean the demand for labour on the part of capital, and the supply of labour by the working men.<sup>9</sup>

Naturally Marx did not leave the question here. Much of his work was devoted to revealing the objective determinants of capital's demand for labour and its supply by the working men.

In this context it should be said that the analysis of the neo-Ricardian school may be formally consistent with general equilibrium theory. This theory does not depend upon the possibility of measuring capital independently of the rate of profit. Moreover, the fact that capital, considered as a homogenous fund of exchange value, does not

receive its marginal product in the general equilibrium system, has no bearing whatsoever on the existence or non-existence of an equilibrium. Moreover, if an equilibrium exists where average rates of profit in each industry are equal, all the neo-Ricardian equations will be satisfied at this point. If this equilibrium happens to be unique, wages and the rate of profit will be uniquely determined, and we shall have a case in which Sraffa's equations have been combined with the determination or distribution by individual preferences.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that, although capital as a homogeneous fund of exchange value may not receive its marginal product, certain marginal equalities may still hold within the general equilibrium system. Provided sufficient continuity assumptions are made to ensure that all equilibrium conditions take the form of equalities, rather than inequalities, the following marginal quantities will be equal: the degree of subjective 'loss' involved in saving, the 'reward' received for saving, and the 'contribution to production' of saving. This equality was illustrated in our earlier example where saving, interest and extra production consisted of a single commodity corn. It is possible to extend the equality to the general case in which more than one commodity may vary. Thus, within the general equilibrium framework, there remain certain apologetic possibilities. Interest can still be seen as a reward for a sacrifice which leads to greater production. The apologetic possibilities are, of course, limited by the fact that there may exist many different equilibrium positions, each of which is equally sanctioned by the moral standards of bourgeois justice.

### *Marxism and the Neo-Ricardian School*

During the last decade or so, there has been a considerable revival of interest in Marxist political economy and valuable work has been done on such topics as imperialism and the role of the state. On the level of fundamental or 'high' theory, however, Marxists still find themselves trapped within a debate whose terms of reference were laid down by vulgar economists such as Bohm-Bawerk, on the one hand, and neo-Ricardians such as Bortkiewicz, on the other. This debate, which has dominated the interpretation of Marx's political economy throughout the entire twentieth century, has received a powerful stimulus from the recent growth of neo-Ricardianism.

In the Anglo-Saxon world at least, Marxists have mainly addressed themselves to such topics as: is the choice of techniques based on values or prices; what is the role of demand in determining prices; what is the formally correct solution to the transformation problem; when is the average rate of profit equal to the ratio of surplus value to the value of capital advanced; when is the rate of surplus value equal to the ratio of profits to wages? In some cases their answers have been rather different from those of the neo-Ricardians, but in general their differences have not been very great. Indeed, many Marxists, such as for example Dobb in his

later writing, regard Sraffa's work as providing both the solution to a number of problems, whose treatment by Marx was unsatisfactory, and perhaps an alternative, more modern version of the labour theory of value.<sup>11</sup>

Now, important though some of these questions may be, Marxist political economy, as a distinct system of thought, cannot be understood in terms of the answers it gives to them. So long as the theoretical work of Marxists is restricted to such questions, Marxism, with good reason, will appear as a rather eccentric wing of neo-Ricardianism—its specific characteristics being a somewhat tedious insistence on the need for a 'historical approach', a frequent dogmatic insistence of the explanation of prices by values, and a particularly militant class rhetoric. Indeed, this is reflected in the widespread identification of neo-Marxism with neo-Ricardianism, an identification which follows Bortkiewicz in seeing the specific characteristics of Marxism as a harmless, but useless, eccentricity.

This view of Marxism, or rather of the system of thought of Karl Marx himself, is in my opinion mistaken. Marx's problematic differs fundamentally from that of Ricardo and the neo-Ricardians. In the second part of this paper, therefore, I shall examine crucial ways in which these two problematics differ.

#### *THE CAPITALIST MODE OF PRODUCTION*

It is well-known that Marx criticised Ricardo (and other classical economists) for thinking of capitalist production as something 'eternal' or 'natural'. This has been widely interpreted to mean that Ricardo was unhistorical in his approach, and that the main distinction between Marx and Ricardo is that Marx saw capitalism as a mere passing phase in the history of human society, whereas Ricardo did not. Indeed, Marxism is seen as Ricardianism plus history.

The trouble with this view is not so much that it is wrong, but that it is superficial. Marx did not criticise Ricardo for failing to analyse capitalism as a system which grew out of an earlier form of society and will in turn be replaced by another form, nor for failing to analyse or describe the historical development of this system. On the contrary, he admired Ricardo's analytical and, in the first instance, a-historical method. Where Ricardo failed, in Marx's opinion, was in his characterisation of the capitalist system, and as a result in his analysis of 'the economic law of motion of modern society'. Moreover, the intellectual reason why he failed to characterise the capitalist system adequately is quite simply that he lacked a concept—the concept of a 'mode of production'. Virtually every one of Marx's specific criticisms of Ricardo can be traced back to the absence of this concept in the latter's work—his confused treatment of prices and values, his failure to distinguish adequately between production and circulation, between surplus value and profit, or between labour and labour power.

Thus, when Marx says Ricardo thought of the capitalist system as

something 'eternal' or 'natural', he is not criticising Ricardo for his un-historical analysis, but saying that, because Ricardo thought of capitalism in this way, he failed to see it as a mode of production with specific features differentiating it from other modes of production. Marx's use of the concept of a 'mode of production' marks a radical shift in problematic, which has been largely unrecognised or ignored by Marxist political economists.

Seen in its most general terms, a mode of production is simply the set of social relations within which men produce. In his famous *Preface to a Contribution* Marx says :

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general.<sup>12</sup>

Any mode of production has two distinct aspects or levels : the mode of appropriation of *nature*, and the mode of appropriation of the *product*. This distinction can be seen clearly in the following passage where Marx describes the capitalist labour process,

The labour-process, turned into the process by which the capitalist consumes labour-power, exhibits two characteristic phenomena. First, the labourer works under the control of the capitalist to whom his labour belongs; the capitalist taking good care that the work is done in a proper manner, and that the means of production are used with intelligence, so that there is no unnecessary waste of raw material, and no wear and tear of the implements beyond what is necessarily caused by the work.

Secondly, the product is the property of the capitalist and not that of the labourer, its immediate producer.<sup>13</sup>

In their appropriation of nature men combine together in a definite set of social relationships specified by such characteristics as production techniques, organisation of the labour process, division of labour, authority and control. Notice that the appropriation of nature, as it is defined here, is a *social* affair. It is not man in the abstract acting upon nature, nor is it the 'non-human world of technology' as one neo-Ricardian has described the labour process.<sup>14</sup> It is social man producing within a definite set of social relationships.

The manner in which the product, and therefore the surplus product, is appropriated varies from one mode of production to another. In feudal or slave society, for example, surplus product is directly appropriated by extra-economic force. In capitalist society it is appropriated on the basis of apparent freedom, according to the *economic* laws of com-

modity exchange. This aspect of a mode of production is widely recognised to involve social relationships. Indeed, under the name 'distribution' the neo-Ricardians treat it as the only level at which social relations occur, and, as the above quotation shows, treat the equally important appropriation of nature as an a-social or natural process.

The two levels of a mode of production are relatively autonomous and cannot be reduced one to another. The laws of motion of a mode of production are based upon the articulation and interaction of the two levels, and these laws can, therefore, only be understood by means of an analysis which takes account of both levels.

With these distinctions in mind, let us examine Marx's characterisation of the capitalist mode of production. To understand his characterisation, one must recognise that Marx was seeking, on the one hand, to contrast the capitalist mode with slave, feudal and other modes of production, in which the labourer is permanently tied to an individual owner or master and does not have the freedom to dispose of his labour power as he wishes, and, on the other hand, he was seeking to contrast industrial capital with merchant, usurers' and other forms of capital.

Capitalist production is characterised by two things: it is the production of commodities—goods are produced for exchange and social production is spontaneously organised by means of this exchange; and every element in the labour process has become a commodity, including labour power itself—the capacity of the labourer to work. Thus, capitalist production is commodity production, generalised to the point where labour-power has become a commodity. The worker cannot, of course, sell himself for an indefinite length of time, for then he would cease to be a freedom.

As a commodity owner, the worker is free to sell or not sell his labour power, as he chooses, subject only to the economic constraints imposed by the exchange of commodities. This is in contrast to feudalism and slavery, where the worker does not possess such freedom. As Marx says in the *Grundrisse*,

In the slavery relationship the worker belongs to an individual, particular owner, whose labour machine he is . . . . In the bondage relationship, the worker is an element of landed property; he is a chattel of the earth just as cattle are . . . . Labour power seems to the free worker to be entirely his property, one of his elements which he as a subject, controls, and which he retains in selling it.

This freedom is, however, formal rather than real, for, although the worker is not compelled by open force to work for others, he does not possess the means to work on his own account, and therefore must out of economic necessity work for others. He is, as Marx says,

free in the double sense, that as a free man he can dispose of his labour-power as his own commodity, and that on the other hand he has no other commodity for sale, is short of everything necessary for the realisation of his labour power.<sup>15</sup>

As a result, he must work for others, or he starves. Unlike the slave or the serf, he has some freedom to choose the individual who will control his labour power, he can within limits choose the capitalist for whom he works. But, although he can free himself from the individual capitalist, he cannot free himself from the despotism of capital as a whole. He must still work for some capitalist. Hence the formal rather than real nature of his freedom. Even so, it remains true that the constraint on the free labourer is the economic law of commodity exchange, rather than the extra-economic force of slave or feudal society.

For our purposes, however, the more important contrast is between industrial capital and other forms of capital. Many 'vulgar socialists' such as Proudhon, sought the explanation for capitalist profit and surplus value in what Marx called the realm of 'circulation'—the buying and selling of commodities, and the lending of money for interest. Merchant capital, which acquires its profit by buying cheap and selling dear, relies upon some monopoly position or form of extra-economic power in the circulation of commodities. Indeed, it is characterised by the fact that its profit derives from the sale and purchase of commodities at prices which differ from values or, more generally, from prices of production.<sup>16</sup> Usury capital is characterised by the fact that it derives profit from the lending of money for interest.

The vulgar socialists looked upon industrial capital—capital directly exploiting labour power by employing workers to produce commodities—as a form of merchant or usurers' capital. The implication of this view is that surplus value can be eliminated simply by making the exchange of commodities competitive and banning the lending of money for interest. Labour power could remain a commodity.

Marx took just the opposite view. In his eyes, the capitalist mode of production was characterised by the fact that surplus value is actually created outside the sphere of circulation, that it does not stem fundamentally from monopoly or extra-economic force in the sphere of circulation, nor from the lending of money for interest. On the contrary, the capitalist mode of production is characterised by competition in the sphere of circulation, and by the 'exchange of equivalents'. Moreover, usurer's and merchant capital are no longer independent forms, but must be seen as derivative forms of industrial capital which is the dominant form in modern society,

both merchant capital and interest-bearing capital are derivative forms, and at the same time it will become clear, why these two forms appear in the course of history before the modern standard form of capital.<sup>17</sup>

The contrast between merchant and industrial capital, and thereby the specific characteristics of industrial capital, can be made clearer by comparing the labour process (production) and the exchange of commodities (circulation) in three different *hypothetical* situations. The first situation is that of simple commodity production, where independent pro-

ducers such as peasants or artisans exchange freely and competitively their commodities. In this mode both production and circulation are characterised by freedom and equality. In the labour process the worker is independent, being under the control of no other person, and is free to do what he wants within the limits laid down by the natural world. In the circulation process he sells his wares freely, without interference, and like any other commodity seller receives the competitive price.

Next, consider a situation where individual producers must sell or buy through intermediaries who hold a monopolistic position. We can consider such a situation as the combination of merchant capital in the sphere of circulation with simple commodity production in the labour process. Historically this was often the form in which independent producers were compelled to trade. In this combination, production, as before, is characterised by freedom and equality. Circulation, however, is characterised by unfreedom and inequality. The monopoly of the intermediaries denies to the individual producers the right, or at least the opportunity, of trading with anyone else. Moreover, the intermediary and the individual producers do not confront each other as equals, as they did before. The intermediary is in a privileged position as a trader.

Finally, consider capitalist production in its pure form, where free competition reigns. In their capacity as commodity traders, all participants, capitalists and workers, are free in the sense that they can sell to anyone willing to buy, and buy from anyone willing to sell. This applies to the worker's sale and the capitalist's purchase of labour power just as much as it applies to transactions in any other commodity. As traders, capitalists and workers participate equally, each having commodities to exchange, each being unable to bring to bear any extra-economic power to alter the ratios at which they must exchange commodities. Thus, as in the case of simple commodity production, circulation is characterised by freedom and equality, the significant difference, of course, being that labour power is now a commodity and the worker sells not his products, but himself. Having sold himself, the worker must now work for the capitalist. In the labour process he works under the control of the capitalist, producing what the latter wants, submitting to capitalist labour discipline and performing the kind of work the capitalist desires. The labour process is, therefore, characterised by unfreedom and inequality. The worker must do as he is told, and the capitalist stands over him as a superior, rather than confronting him as an equal, as he does in the sphere of circulation.

The three situations just described are shown in figure below.

	• Merchant Capital Plus Simple Commodity Production	Simple Commodity Production	Capitalist Production
<i>Circulation</i>	unfreedom and inequality	freedom and equality	freedom and equality
<i>Production</i>	freedom and equality	freedom and equality	unfreedom and inequality

It is clear that in these examples, merchant capital and industrial capital are related to the pure form of simple commodity production in diametrically opposite ways. Merchant capital represents the introduction of unfreedom and inequality in the realm of exchange. Industrial capital represents the introduction of unfreedom and inequality in production. It is also clear that no amount of freedom and equality in the realm of circulation will convert capitalist production into simple commodity production. Now, bourgeois equality applies exclusively to the circulation process, where individuals participate as commodity buyers and sellers. It does not relate to the labour process. Thus, capitalist production is consistent with bourgeois equality, and, for that matter, with bourgeois freedom which allows every commodity owner to dispose of his commodity as he wishes. Finally, bourgeois justice sanctions the unfreedom and inequality in production. As a seller of labour power, the worker has freely consented to work for the capitalist for a given length of time, under known conditions. In making him work, the capitalist is only exacting his due as a commodity purchaser. The fact that the worker is compelled to sell himself to the capitalist, because he has been dispossessed at some stage in the past, or else was bred a proletarian, is of no concern to bourgeois justice, which concerns itself exclusively with the actual act of exchange and not the circumstances which bring about and condition this exchange. Thus, capitalist production is consistent with bourgeois equality, freedom and justice. Merchant capital, on the other hand, is not. In introducing monopoly or non-economic coercion into circulation, it is violating these standards. So long, therefore, as we are considering the situation of the simple commodity producer, facing feudal or other monopolies, the application of bourgeois standards represents a liberation for the labourer. When we consider capitalist production, however, this is not the case. On the contrary, it is the application of bourgeois standards to circulation which is the foundation of the worker's unfreedom and inequality in the labour process. Indeed, it is the existence of free and unfettered commodity exchange which makes the 'law of value' act upon the individual capitalist as an external coercive force, which compels the individual capitalist to behave as he does in the labour process, which leads him to revolutionise the labour process so that the worker becomes a mere appendage to the machine. As Marx remarked on the relationship between freedom (anarchy) in exchange and unfreedom (despotism) in production,

in a society with capitalist production, anarchy in the social division of labour and despotism in that of the workshop are mutual conditions of the other.<sup>18</sup>

Now, the crucial point about the vulgar socialists was that they thought that the worker could be liberated by the application of bourgeois morality. As we have seen, however, this is not the case. Indeed, in its purest form, capitalism is the very embodiment of bourgeois morality, since all commodity sellers receive their rights as commodity sellers.

In putting forward their demands for freedom and equality in the realm of circulation, the vulgar socialists were putting forward the demand of small artisans and other simple commodity producers, seeking to free themselves from domination by merchant capital, which in many cases was gradually impoverishing them and converting them into proletarians. To these workers, the demands of the vulgar socialists promised a short-term if not a long-term salvation. To the proletarian, however, who was already compelled to sell his labour power they promised nothing. Indeed, many of the great struggles of the working class, over such questions as the limitation of the working day or the formation of trade unions, have been struggles against bourgeois freedom in exchange, for they have sought to deny to the individual worker the right to dispose of his labour power as he wished. The freedom of the individual worker has been curtailed in the interests of the working class as a whole.

The basic position of Marx is summed up in the following celebrated passage from *Capital*, describing the sphere of circulation.

This sphere that we are deserting, within whose boundaries the sale and purchase of labour-power goes on, is in fact a very Eden of the innate rights of man. There alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham. Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, say of labour-power, are constrained only by their own free will. They contract as free agents, and the agreement they come to, is but the form in which they give legal expression to their common will. Equality, because each enters into relation with the other, as with a simple owner of commodities, and they exchange equivalent for equivalent. Property, because each disposes only of what is his own. And Bentham, because each looks only to himself. The only force that brings them together and puts them in relation with each other, is the selfishness, the gain and the private interests of each. Each looks to himself only, and no one troubles himself about the rest, and just because they do so, do they all, in accordance with the pre-established harmony of things, or under the auspices of an all shrewd providence, work together to their mutual advantage, for the common weal and in the interest of all.

On leaving this sphere of simple circulation or of exchange of commodities, which furnishes the 'Free-trader Vulgaris' with his views and ideas, and with the standard by which he judges a society based on capital and wages, we think we can perceive a change in the physiognomy of our dramatis personæ. He, who before was the money-owner, now strides in front as capitalist; the possessor of labour-power follows as his labourer. The one with an air of importance, smirking, intent on business; the other, timid and holding back, like one who is bringing his own hide to market and has nothing to expect but—a hiding.<sup>19</sup>

On the basis of this discussion, let us now examine some points where Marx differs from Ricardo and his modern followers.

## THREE BASIC POINTS

1 *The Origin of Surplus Value*

Marx stated that surplus value originated in production and not in circulation, and that surplus-product represented the surplus or unpaid labour of workers. This has been interpreted by many, including Bortkiewicz and other neo-Ricardians, to mean that profits or the surplus product represent a *deduction* from the product of labour, and that the capitalist is able to deduct this surplus product because he owns the means of production, without which production is impossible.

As it stands this interpretation of Marx is either incorrect or incomplete. If by 'deduction', it is meant that the capitalist obtains his profit by making use of a monopoly position in circulation and cheating the worker, the interpretation expresses a view diametrically opposed to that of Marx who, as we have seen, did not locate the origin of profit within the realm of circulation.

Alternatively, the expression 'deduction from the product of labour' may simply mean that workers provide the only human factor in the production process and, therefore, create the entire product. From this point of view, all output is the product of labour and it follows *definitionally* that surplus product is a part of labour's product and is, therefore, a deduction from this product. Although correct, and accepted by Marx, this view is superficial and certainly does not require his long analysis to sustain it. Indeed, there is something rather circular in the argument which first defines *all* output as the product of labour, and then triumphantly exclaims that it has shown surplus product to be a deduction from the product of labour. Of course, for propagandist purposes, it is useful to make such an argument against the apologetic versions of vulgar economy, which see the 'sacrifice' of the capitalist as a contribution to production.

Against more sophisticated neoclassical economists, such as Debreu, however, such an argument is useless. They would agree that, considered from a technical point of view, the only human contribution to production is labour, and that capitalists get a part of the total product because they own the means of production. Indeed, they would go further and say that all this takes place on the basis of competition, of bourgeois justice.

The argument could be given more weight by pointing to the origins of the present distribution of property, how workers were dispossessed in the process of primitive accumulation, and how the capitalist system has mechanisms for ensuring that sufficient proletarians will be available for exploitation. Even with this addition, however, the interpretation fails to come to grips with Marx's specific characterisation of the capitalist mode of production and the form of exploitation within it. Indeed, it fails to distinguish any significant differences between the capitalist mode of production, where the worker labours under the direct control of the

capitalist, and certain other modes of production, such as the domestic system in which the labourer works at home, using materials and perhaps means of production owned by the entrepreneur, or alternatively, simple commodity production where workers are in debt to the moneylender. In all, but capitalist production, the worker is not paid a wage for his labour power, but receives payment for his labour in the shape of the completed product. This distinction does not, however, play any great role in the main deduction theories, which pay very little attention to the labour process and the social relations under which it is conducted.

This distinction does however play a crucial role in Marx and one must interpret him literally, when he says that surplus value is created in production and not in circulation, for then one is compelled to take into account the specific feature of capitalism as a mode of *production*, not merely as a mode of distribution, as the deduction theorists, particularly those of the neo-Ricardian school, tend to think of it. In particular, one must begin with the fact that, in this mode of production, the labourer works under the control of the capitalist, who *compels* him to work, to produce value. Moreover, the worker is compelled to work for longer than is necessary merely to replace the means of subsistence he consumes. Thus, he is compelled to perform *surplus* labour, which is embodied in a surplus product, which being a commodity is surplus value. It is this *emphasis on the labour process* which characterises Marx's analysis, and which, more than anything else, distinguishes him from all main schools of bourgeois economics, both neoclassical and neo-Ricardian, as well as the majority of modern Marxist writers, who display much the same faults as the neo-Ricardians.

This emphasis is particularly clear when Marx discusses Ricardo's treatment of wages. Ricardo, like the neo-Ricardians of today, took the intensity and duration of the working-day as given, and considered merely changes in the rate of wages per unit of time. In doing so, he removed production, as a social process, from the picture. Surplus value is seen, not as something intimately related to the social power of capital within the labour process, but as the result of two factors: on the one hand, the real wage rate which reflects the subsistence needs of workers, together with their bargaining power, and, on the other hand, the productivity of labour, which in the Ricardian tradition, reflects the ingenuity of the capitalist, rather than the struggle between capital and labour within the production process.

The effects of this perspective are described by Marx in the following quotations:

the labourer must first be *compelled* to work in excess of the necessary time, and this compulsion is exerted by capital. This is missing in Ricardo's work, and therefore also the whole struggle over the regulation of the normal working-day.<sup>20</sup>

*The origin of surplus-value* does not become clear and consequently Ricardo is reproached by his successors for having failed to grasp and

expound the nature of surplus-value. That is part of the reason for their scholastic attempts at explaining it. But because thus the origin and nature of surplus-value is not clearly comprehended, the surplus-labour plus the necessary labour, in short, the *total working-day*, is regarded as a fixed magnitude, the differences in the amount of surplus-value are overlooked, and productivity of capital, the *compulsion to perform surplus-labour*—on the one hand (to perform) absolute surplus-labour, and on the other its innate urge to shorten the necessary labour-time—are not recognised, and therefore the *historical* justification for capital is not set forth. Adam Smith, however, had already stated the correct formula. Important as it was, to resolve value into labour, it was equally important to resolve surplus-value into surplus-labour, and to do so in explicit terms.<sup>21</sup>

In contrast to Ricardo, Marx initially took the daily wage as fixed and considered variations in the duration and intensity of work. This enabled him to concentrate on what he considered to be the crucial aspect of capitalist exploitation that, behind the facade of freedom and equality in the exchange of commodities, lies the harsh reality of compulsion and inequality in the labour process. Later, both in *Capital* itself and in *Wages, Price and Profit*, Marx allows the daily wage to vary and builds up a picture which includes both the struggle over wages in the sphere of circulation and the struggle over the duration and intensity of work in the labour process.

Provided our sole aim is to study certain formal relationships between technology, real wages and the rate of profit, there is little to choose between the approaches of Marx and Ricardo. *Ex-post* they lead to the same result. Workers perform surplus labour in either case and the same equations will describe the relationship between the various market magnitudes—prices, wages, etc. Indeed, the Ricardian approach is perhaps simpler. If, however, our aim is to understand capitalism as a mode of production and to 'reveal the economic law of motion of society', it is ridiculous to ignore certain fundamental determinants of this motion and concentrate exclusively on the quantities which appear in the equations of Sraffa and other neo-Ricardians. For they, like the neoclassicals, considered production to be an asocial or natural process. For them, capital is, as I have already said, a social relationship only when it concerns the appropriation of the product, or as they put it 'the distribution of income'. For them, all social relations are focussed on the process of circulation. The fact that capital also organises and enforces the production of commodities, and the production of surplus value, is of no importance to them. Their equations, indeed their whole theory, could, with minor changes, be modified to fit a society in which workers hired their equipment from capitalist owners, who took no part in the production process. Provided the real wage was defined to mean what the workers retain after the payment of hire charges to the capitalists, the formal relationship would be unchanged. Moreover, capitalists would still derive their in-

come from the ownership of the means of production, and they would still 'deduct' their profit from the product of labour. The fact that neo-Ricardian theory can, with so little modification, be adapted to suit such different modes of production, suggests that it is seriously deficient.

## 2 *The Value of Labour Power*

Marx criticised the classical economists for talking of the 'value of labour', which he considered to be an irrational expression for the 'value of labour-power'. He himself gave a variety of reasons why the latter was the correct expression.

In the first place, it corresponded to the fact that exploitation in the capitalist system is based upon bourgeois justice, that workers sell their capacity to work at its value—they are not cheated. As Marx says in his *Marginal Notes on Wagner*,

Now in my presentation profit on capital is in fact also not "only a deduction of 'theft' from the labourer". On the contrary, I represent the capitalist as the necessary functionary of capitalist production, and indicate at length that he does not only 'deduct' or 'rob' but enforces the production of surplus value and thus first helps to create what is to be deducted; I further indicate in detail that even if in commodity exchange only *equivalents* are exchanged, the capitalist—as soon as he has paid the labourer the real value of his labour power—quite rightfully, i. e. by the right corresponding to his mode of production, obtains surplus value.<sup>22</sup> (translated in *Theoretical Practice*)

In the second place it resolved the classics problem that labour, unlike any other commodity, appeared to have two distinct values, one corresponding to the labour contained in the workers's subsistence, and the other corresponding to the worker's actual labour. To overcome this, the classics distinguished between living and dead labour, suggesting that living labour should have one value, and dead or embodied labour another value. This distinction between living and dead labour destroyed the unity of their value theory, and Marx's replacement of 'labour' by 'labour-power' served to restore this unity.

Thus, the introduction of the concept 'labour-power' served both to emphasise that exploitation in capitalist society is based upon bourgeois justice, and to unify the theory of value so that every commodity has a unique value. Neither of these, however, is the fundamental reason for the change. This, once again, concerns the characterisation of capitalism as a mode of production. So long as the classics used the concept 'value of labour', they were able to avoid discussing the social relations of the labour process itself, or at least to avoid giving these relations a central part in their analysis. The significance of this can be seen from the following passage from *Capital*,

That which comes directly face to face with the possessor of money on the market, is in fact not labour, but the labourer. What the latter sells is his labour-power. As soon as his labour actually begins, it

has already ceased to belong to him; it can therefore no longer be sold by him. Labour is the substance, and the immanent measure of value, but *has itself no value*.<sup>23</sup>

By the time the worker enters the production process, he has already sold himself to the capitalist, even if his payment actually comes later, even if he works on piece-rates. His labour power no longer belongs to him. He no longer controls his own labour.

It was the absence of the concept 'labour-power' which prevented the classics from seeing capital in its entirety, as a social relationship,

Instead of *labour*, Ricardo should have discussed labour power. But had he done so, *capital* would also have been *revealed* as the material conditions of labour, confronting the labourer as power that had acquired an independent existence and capital would at once have been revealed as a *definite social relationship*. Ricardo thus only distinguishes capital as "accumulated labour" from "immediate labour". And it is something purely physical, only an element in the *labour-process*, from which the relation between labour and capital, wages and profits, could never be developed.<sup>24</sup>

Note the dual nature of the social relationship which is capital. On the one hand, as a relation between capital and labour, it concerns the subordination of the worker to the capitalist during the appropriation of nature, and, on the other hand, as a relation between profits and wages, it expresses their relations during the appropriation of the product.

In the last analysis, the significance of the distinction between labour and labour power is that, in purchasing labour power, capital establishes its despotism in the labour process. This despotism, however, results in the constant revolutionising of the techniques of production, raising the productivity of the worker and bringing together ever greater number of workers, thereby laying the material foundation for a new society and stimulating the resistance of the class which will bring this new society into being.

This concept of the social relation 'capital' is, it will be noticed, markedly different from that of either Ricardo or the neo-Ricardians. For the latter, capital is a social relationship only in so far as it represents a claim to a part of the product.

### 3 *Variable and Constant Capital*

Amongst a wide variety of economists, there has been considerable confusion about the distinction between, or even the meaning of, the terms 'variable' and 'constant' capital. Some economists have immediately identified these with circulating and fixed capital respectively. Others have identified variable capital directly with the wage fund, so that if workers are paid at the end of the production period, as Marx said they usually were, variable capital is not in fact capital, since it is not advanced.

To understand the distinction, we must begin with the simple fact

that variable capital is fundamentally the worker himself, or rather his labour power. It is true that Marx used the term to describe the wage fund, but such a use is derivative and by no means fundamental. Thus, variable capital is labour power—the living or subjective element in the labour process. Constant capital, by contrast, is the dead or the objective element in the process. The reason, that either of these is capital, has nothing whatsoever to do with whether they are paid in advance or not. What matters is that, during the production process, both constituents are under the control of the capitalist. Both means of production and the worker are incorporated into capital itself.

On entering that process, they become incorporated with capital. As co-operators, as members of a working organism, they are but special modes of existence of capital. Hence, the productive power developed by the labourer when working in co-operation, is the productive power of capital. This power is developed gratuitously, whenever the workmen are placed under given conditions, and it is capital that places them under such conditions. Because this power costs capital nothing, and because, on the other hand, the labourer himself does not develop it before his labour belongs to capital, it appears as a power with which capital is endowed by Nature—a productive power that is immanent in capital.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, constant capital is means of production and variable capital is labour power. Each of these is to be interpreted first of all, not as components of the fund expended in purchasing them, but rather as qualitatively distinct elements within the labour process itself, in other words as elements of what Marx called 'productive' capital in contradistinction to money or commodity capital. By calling labour power 'variable' capital, Marx established a conceptual connection between the creation of surplus value and the despotic nature of the capitalist production process. The surplus value created by workers in this process is not determined simply by the means of consumption needed to sustain them, but also by the amount and intensity of the labour they are compelled to perform. By increasing the amount or intensity of labour his workers perform, the individual capitalist is able to extract additional surplus labour. If powerful enough, therefore, he can *vary* the amount of surplus value his workers create. Thus, the term 'variable' draws attention to the fact that the surplus value actually created varies according to the relative power of combatants within the production process.

These definitions are so simply and so clearly given by Marx, that it would seem impossible for anyone who has read even the first volume of *Capital*, to misunderstand them or fail to see their importance. Yet generations of economists, both Left and Right, have done just this. Such is the power of tradition over men's minds, a tradition that insists on reading Marx as though he were an English classical economist.

- <sup>1</sup> The author would particularly like to thank Tom Asimakopulos, Frank Hahn, Geoff Harcourt and Elman Wolfstetter for their helpful comments.
- <sup>2</sup> For sophisticated expositions of neoclassical theory see, for example, Arrow and Hahn (1971) or Debreu (1959). For a less sophisticated exposition see Ferguson (1969) or, indeed, almost any conventional economics textbook.
- <sup>3</sup> Debreu, 1959, pp 78-80.
- <sup>4</sup> cf Bachelard, especially chapter 1.
- <sup>5</sup> Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Vol 3, P 503.
- <sup>6</sup> For the classic statement of this view see Hicks, 1963, especially chapter XI.
- <sup>7</sup> The major work of this school is undoubtedly Sraffa (1960). A number of important articles by Garegnani (1970), Pasinetti (1969), Robinson (1953-54) and others are reprinted in Harcourt and Laing (1971) or Hunt and Schwartz (1971).
- <sup>8</sup> The exchange value of any bundle of commodities depends on two factors: its physical composition and the price of each individual commodity in terms of the numeraire (money). In any comparison between two states of an economy, therefore, differences in the exchange value of capital or output may reflect either or both of these factors. Let us assume that an equal amount of labour is performed in the two states and that each state is, in the conventional technological sense, efficient. By comparing one state with the other, we can define the *marginal product of capital* as the difference in output divided by the difference in constant capital, where all magnitudes are reduced to a common standard by expressing them in current prices i. e. in terms of their exchange value relative to the numeraire commodity. It is clear that this marginal product will reflect, not only physical differences between the two states, but also differences in relative prices. The exchange value of capital, for example may be higher in one state than another, not because its physical components are different, but because they have different prices. It is this shift in relative prices which accounts for the possible non-equality of the rate of interest and the marginal product, even when appropriate neoclassical assumptions are made. To get around this difficulty, neoclassical economists use a different definition of marginal product, and proceed as though relative prices in the two states were identical. As a device for micro, partial, or efficiency analysis, this approach is acceptable. In the study of income distribution, however, it is not, and differences in relative prices between the two states must be taken into account. The role of relative prices in this context was first recognised by Wicksell (1934). For good discussions of the subject see Metzler (1951) and Malinvaud (1953).
- <sup>9</sup> Karl Marx, *Selected Works*, p 227.
- <sup>10</sup> Both Garegnani (1970) and Pasinetti (1972) base their rejection of supply and demand theories, including general equilibrium theory, on the fact that aggregate 'capital' may not be a continuous function of the rate of profit. It is not clear from their arguments, however, why supply and demand theories must necessarily depend upon such continuity. It is true that traditional aggregate theory required this kind of continuity, but no such assumption is made by general equilibrium theory, which allows for the possibility of aggregate capital being a discontinuous function of the rate of profit. Whatever its other failings and they are many, general equilibrium theory is not open to this particular objection.
- <sup>11</sup> cf Dobb, 1970.
- <sup>12</sup> Karl Marx, *Selected Works*, p 182.
- <sup>13</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol 1, 184-185.
- <sup>14</sup> Bharadwaj, 1963.
- <sup>15</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol I, p 356.
- <sup>16</sup> Marx used the term 'merchant capital' in two different senses: sometimes to denote commercial capital in general, even when it operated under competitive conditions, and other times to denote capital which made a profit by cheating or monopoly in the sphere of exchange. In the text the term is used in this second and narrower sense.

- <sup>17</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol I, p 165.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p 357.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p 178.
- <sup>20</sup> Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Vol 2, p 406.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p 406.
- <sup>22</sup> Translated in *Theoretical Practice*.
- <sup>23</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol 1, p 536.
- <sup>24</sup> Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Vol 2, P 400.
- <sup>25</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol 1, 333.

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PRAKASH KARAT

## *Agrarian Relations in Malabar—1925-1948*

### PART TWO

#### DIFFERENTIATION AMONGST THE PEASANTRY

IN the first part of this article (*Social Scientist*, September 1973) we had studied the tenurial patterns, nature of landlordism and the type of rent that existed. In this part we analyse the factors that contributed to differentiation amongst the peasantry—alienation of land, usury, commercial agriculture and so on—in order to understand the nature of agrarian relations in Malabar under imperialism. Such a study would provide the necessary groundwork for analysing the socio-political changes that affected the Malabar peasantry in the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century.

The process of disintegration and its impact on the peasantry can be assessed by studying the alienation of land from the peasantry, the role of usury and the growth of commercial agriculture and the marketing system.

The alienation of land from the peasants was accelerated dramatically with the onset of the world depression in 1929. An estimate for the period, 1924 to 1928 showed that on an average only 42.98 acres of land were sold per year in Malabar for recovery of revenue arrears, thus suggesting that the collection of revenue posed no problems in the district.<sup>29</sup> But in the thirties, the situation changed drastically, as will be evident from the figures given below. The annual statistics

of revenue coercive processes show an enormous increase in notices of demands issued and lands and movable property sold to meet these demands. To make matters worse, resettlement of land revenue in Malabar district during the period 1929-32 coincided with the depression. Revenue rates went up by 18½ per cent for wet lands and rates for garden lands also steeply increased by changes in the classification of lands.<sup>30</sup>

During the years between 1930-31 and 1939-40 a total of 36,909 acres of dry lands and 7228 acres of wet lands were sold to meet revenue demands.<sup>31</sup> In the year 1930-31, 37,988 acres of land were sold against the previous 5530 acres in 1929-30, by coercive processes under Act II of 1864.<sup>32</sup> The ruin affected many landlord families, as Namboodiripad has pointed out, because many of them had got heavily indebted in order to buy up lands in the good years preceding the depression.<sup>33</sup> But the majority of those affected were small peasants.

A careful analysis of the statistics of revenue coercive processes reveals that, first, the extent of wet land attached or sold is less than the dry land. Secondly, in noting the number of defaulters and the total extent of lands sold, making allowance for some big holdings, we find that the average holding appears to be quite small. One concludes that, as a rule, it was the middle and poor peasantry who were primarily affected by the revenue coercive processes. It must be noted in this connection that the revenue officials used to attach the crops and movable properties of the tenants, if the landlord did not pay the assessment.<sup>34</sup>

Increasing alienation is also evident from the official data which show that land was being transferred through sales, gifts and mortgages, in a big way. In 1923 alone for example, there were 191,590 registrations affecting immovable property. The aggregate value of land dealt with in that year amounted to Rs 429 lakhs.<sup>35</sup>

Similarly, statistics are available to show that sale transfers between 1921 and 1930 amounted to 19,100, and went up to 23,500 in 1931-1940<sup>36</sup>. The number of sale transfers almost doubled between 1921-30 and 1941-50 helped along by the legislation passed in the early thirties legalising partition of family *tarawads*.

### EVICTIIONS

The threat of evictions and the execution of numerous eviction decrees was another instrument by which many peasant families were alienated from the land they had leased in. With juridical rights vested in the *jenmis* by the courts, evictions became a powerful weapon to extort more rent and to reduce the peasantry to a pauperised condition. Eviction was the immediate consequence of inability to meet the exorbitant demands. The whole legal process in Malabar became a complex maze of litigious proceedings dealing with disputes of *jenmi kanam* rights, and the interrelated issues of the *marumakkathayam* system, *karnavan* rights and so forth, all based on the precapitalist social relations. All the strains and stresses on these latter social relations found expression in the law courts.<sup>37</sup>

A study of the eviction statistics provides a melancholy story of the main burden of the tenantry (both non-cultivating tenants and peasants), the threat of eviction. It should be noted that since the official statistics of evictions relate only to those which figured in the law courts and since many evictions were carried out without resorting to legal processes (by threats and intimidations by the big landlords), the magnitude of the evil is only partially reflected in the official statistics.<sup>38</sup>

NUMBER OF EVICTION SUITS FILED AND DISPOSED OF IN THE SEVERAL  
COURTS IN THE DISTRICT OF MALABAR FOR THE PERIOD  
1916-1926

Total Number	Yearly Average	Decided Total	ex-parte % of (1)	Decided for plaintiff Number	% of (1)	No of Decrees actually executed	No Yearly average	% of (1)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
51,730	4,703	6,620	8.9	32,103	62	24,258	2401	43

After the passing of the Malabar Tenancy Act, 1929 the eviction suits did not in any way decline as shown by the following figures for the period 1940 to 1946 :

NUMBER OF EVICTION SUITS FILED AND DISPOSED OF IN THE PERIOD  
1940 TO 1946 IN THE DISTRICT OF MALABAR

Total Number	Yearly average	Renewals ordered Number	% of (1)	Dismissed on deposit of arrears of rent Number	% of (1)	Evictions actually ordered Number	% of (1)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
37,080	5294	2896	8	2552	6.9	20,070	54.1

Evictions were directed on the one hand against a large number of the intermediary tenants showing a drive by the *jenmis* to eliminate the *kanakkarans*. On the other hand, a large number of the peasants holding land under various tenures, particularly under long-term tenures were also affected. Eviction meant that a peasant was often thrown out of his dwelling which was situated on the *paramba* leased from the landlord.

*Melcharths* were also resorted to. The total number of *melcharths* executed between 1916 and 1926 exceeded 40,000 and the evil was mitigated only after the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1929 was passed.<sup>39</sup> Eviction suits were often used as a threat to raise rents, as evidenced by the large number of suits compromised out of the courts.

## USURY

It is clear from our study of indebtedness during the period that usury in Malabar differed in some respects from some of the typical forms it assumed in other parts of India. The increasing pauperisation of the peasantry and their alienation from the means of production did not necessarily lead to the development of a class of professional moneylenders. There was no indigenous commercial caste which specialised in usury such as the chettiers and banias. Moneylending was carried on mainly by certain agrarian classes; even the traders who were involved in such operations were linked with agriculture through rural industry and trade.

All the data on indebtedness available for the period suggest that moneylending was carried on predominantly by a strata of landlords and rich peasants. The rich peasants lent out money to the poorer peasants and, thus heightened the trends towards the disintegration of the peasantry. Some of these facts emerge in a survey of three villages, conducted in 1936 in Malabar for the Report of Agricultural Indebtedness in Madras Province.<sup>40</sup> There were no professional moneylenders in the villages. There were "78 agriculturists" who were moneylenders. For a large portion of the total debt incurred (Rs 1,56,604 out of Rs 1,62,986), the source was "moneylenders, professional and otherwise" and this meant that the bulk of this credit was advanced by "agriculturists". This phenomenon was not a recent trend but had been recorded by Logan in 1881.<sup>41</sup> Out of the 7994 actual cultivators he had examined, there were 4401 who were in debt and there were another 1406 who had lent money out on interest. The Census statistics also confirm this. If one peruses the Census tables for subsidiary occupations of the rural classes for 1911 and 1931, it is evident that under the categories of "rent receivers" (both landlord and tenant), "rent payers" (both landowners and tenants), a consistently higher percentage of those who returned subsidiary occupations were listed as "moneylenders and grain and pulse merchants", than for comparative figures for the rest of the Madras province.<sup>42</sup>

Probably, a large number of the moneylenders under the category "agriculturists" came from the ranks of non-cultivating *kanakkarans* who came to acquire liquid capital through investment and speculation in land. The role of traders in usury cannot be minimised. Small commodity production and trade had developed in Malabar. Trade and usury were inextricably linked up, revealing the still close links between rural industry, trade and agriculture. The coconut trade, the husk and coir cottage industry and the credit flowing into this was an example of this unity. MacEwen had analysed mortgage documents and found that during the period 1923 to 1928, the 921 documents processed showed that the total amount borrowed was Rs 4,38,699. The break-up of the borrowers and lenders according to profession is given below:<sup>43</sup>

BORROWERS				LENDERS			
Agricul- turists	Traders	Money- lenders	Others	Agricul- turists	Traders	Money- lenders	Others
489	68	—	366	422	121	6	374

MacEwen commented on this :

It is interesting to note that practically none of the lenders are noted as professional moneylenders; the fact is that in Malabar as in other districts, land is regarded as the safest form of investment for surplus funds and a well-to-do ryot often carries on a certain amount of moneylending in addition to his normal agricultural pursuits.<sup>44</sup>

One of the chief characteristics of holding *verumpattam* land was that the peasant could not escape debt, given the magnitude of rent imposed upon him. Innes in his report stated that

The opinion of an officer with 30 years service in the Revenue Department is that most of the *verumpattam* tenants are chronically in debt.

They borrow money in *karkitayam* (July-August) on the security of their crop and this is one of the chief values of *verumpattam* land.<sup>45</sup>

A survey for the Resettlement Report in 1927-28 was made of 825 ryots in 139 *desams* throughout the district.<sup>46</sup> The study revealed that 487 ryots or 59 per cent were in debt, and that their debts represented 23 per cent of the total landed property of the 825 ryots examined. It cannot be stated from this data as to what categories of peasants these 825 ryots belonged to. But a more detailed analysis which appears in another report that we have already quoted for three villages gives some further clarifications :<sup>47</sup>

Number of registered landholders	739	Those indebted	375
Number of tenants of all types	904	Those indebted	968
Number of farm servants	966	Those indebted	734

(The number of indebted among the tenants is more than the number of tenants enumerated because some of the tenants were listed among the landholders and vice versa.)

Marx had pointed out that usury affects the landowning classes also.<sup>48</sup> The figures collected from the books of eleven agricultural co-operative societies drawn from all taluks by the Resettlement Officer gave the following results : These figures show that the members of these societies who owned landed properties were saddled with a debt representing about 15 per cent of their landed property and 12 per cent of their total property.<sup>49</sup> Since these co-operatives contributed only a minor portion of the credit, the indebtedness among the landowning classes must have been considerably higher.

We are not in a position to assess precisely the development of interest-bearing capital which was liberated from its purely usurious role, but the development of banking institutions, credit societies and so on must

not be ignored. It is clear, however, that usury of the traditional type continued to make the conditions of the peasantry wretched and to enrich a few of the rich peasants and intermediaries. Increasingly these sections practising usury entered into credit transactions with the modern credit institutions; but they did so, usually, for the purpose of speculation and investment in land. How far these lower forms of capital became significant in Malabar, is a question we are unable to take up within the confines of this study.

### AGRICULTURAL LABOUR AND POOR PEASANTS

The differentiation among the peasantry, then, was a complex process which had been initiated from the nineteenth century onwards. The gradual and painful process which affected various levels of the economy produced a highly complicated type of relations of production, which manifested various admixtures and a mingling of precapitalist with capitalist relations. To identify some of these transitional forms, it is necessary to have a clear definition of the class of *agricultural labourers*. Theoretically, an agricultural labourer must be defined as a person who has been separated from all his means of production except his own labour power and is therefore forced to sell his labour power as a commodity in order to live. Such 'free' wage labourers of the pure type formed only a small nucleus of the large masses of the peasantry who were forced to sell their labour power to subsist.

To begin with the 'untouchable' castes like the Cherumans and the Pulayas and allied subcastes constituted the bulk of the agricultural labouring population. It must be noted that they were in a transitional phase from semi-serfdom to wage labour. The development of plantations, the increasing demand for labour power and the development of commercialisation and a few factories, provided them with a mobility which was more marked in Malabar than in other districts.<sup>50</sup>

With the growing differentiation among the peasantry this nucleus was supplemented by the expropriated Mappilla and Thiyya peasantry. The transformation of serfs into agricultural workers occurred over a long period. The process of "semi-proletarianisation" most accurately describes their conditions during the period of our study. It is exceedingly difficult in Malabar to precisely demarcate the poor peasants and agricultural labourers, especially amongst the non-Cheruman and non-Pulaya peasantry. Most of the impoverished peasantry still clung on to small plots of lands or homesteads in which some garden crops were cultivated. If they did not own them they leased in such homesteads. Our study of 30 individual peasants suggests that many poor peasants were forced to send out some of their family members to work on other persons' land for wages, or take up subsidiary 'coolie' occupation.<sup>51</sup>

As for the Cheruman and Pulaya peasantry, many of them leased in small plots of land from landlords or rich peasants, paying a small rent, or, in exchange, worked on their lands. They were also known to have

leased in a small homestead plot from one landlord for some garden crop cultivation, and to have worked for wages on another landlord's plot. While it must be noted that many of these "agricultural labourers" were not completely separated from their means of subsistence—a few had a pair of cattle or a plough—they do indicate the trend of capitalist penetration in agriculture. This poor peasant/agricultural labour category constituted the biggest group amongst the peasantry.

No reliable estimate of the proportion of agricultural labourers in Malabar can be made from Census returns on agricultural occupations. In 1921 the percentage of agricultural labourers and their dependents in the total agricultural population was 40.3. In 1931 the proportion of actual workers among agricultural labourers to total workers in pasture and agriculture was also 40.3.<sup>52</sup> Much cannot be made out of these figures precisely because the classifications in different censuses were widely divergent. But the data bring out clearly the overwhelming importance of this category.

Another important question is the nature of wages paid to agricultural labourers. For this the most useful source is data collected by the Census of wages. In 1911, some data were provided on the nature of the wages paid in villages where the survey was conducted. Although we do not have similar material for later periods, the data collected in 1911 do broadly indicate the trends.<sup>53</sup> Out of the 725 villages surveyed, it is interesting to note that there were 117 villages in which the rates were familiar as cash wage without supplements; in 199 villages it was familiar as a cash wage with supplements in kind; and in another 322 villages the rate was familiar as grain wage. Thus 322 out of 725 villages, that is, 44.4 per cent of the villages, in this sample, had wages only in kind. In 316 villages, that is, 43.6 per cent of the total, cash wages were familiar. Thus 16.1 per cent of the total villages had wages only in cash.

The data indicate that by 1911, payment of money wages to agricultural labourers was common although wages in kind were still predominant. All the evidence we have seen suggests that payment of wages in cash was more prevalent in North Malabar where garden-cropping had developed and money rent was common, than in the rest of Malabar. During harvest time for paddy it was the practice in Malabar to pay the harvesters a share of the grain that was threshed, on the principle of one bundle of paddy per ten. It was only in very rare cases that cash wages were paid during harvest time in paddy lands.

### *Commercial Agriculture*

The extent of commercialisation of the agrarian economy is evident from an analysis of the crop patterns during the period of our study. The table shows the area of rice and non-food crops as percentages of the total area sown:<sup>54</sup>

Year	Rice as a percentage of gross area sown	Non-food as a percentage of gross area	Year	Rice as a percentage of gross area sown	Non-food as a percentage of gross area
1924-25	51.64	45.09	1934-35	49.02	48.19
1925-26	51.94	44.94	1935-36	49.05	48.03
1926-27	51.60	45.31	1936-37	49.50	47.63
1927-28	51.00	45.88	1937-38	NA	NA
1928-29	50.59	46.48	1938-39	48.22	48.94
1929-30	50.22	46.07	1939-40	47.90	49.29
1930-31	50.02	46.41	1940-41	48.52	48.69
1931-32	50.31	46.22	1941-42	47.50	49.45
1932-33	49.14	47.77	1942-43	48.12	48.93
1933-34	50.19	46.84	1943-44	47.82	49.36

From the above table it is clear that paddy came to occupy less than 50 per cent of the cropped area in the 1930s and that between 1924-25 and 1943-44 there was a fall of nearly 4 per cent in area of paddy sown. On the other hand, the position occupied by non-food crops in the gross area sown rose by nearly 4 per cent. When statistics of individual crops are examined, we see similar increases in the area sown with coconuts, pepper, tea and so on. Paddy had lost its primacy by the turn of the century itself. Between the period 1912-13 and the five years beginning from 1921-22, the proportion of paddy grown to the total area sown fell from 53.43 to 51.49 per cent.<sup>55</sup> In the period following the First World War there was a boom in the prices of commercial crops and as a result its cultivation also rapidly expanded.

From an analysis of the crop pattern geographically, it is clear that North Malabar taluks which specialised in garden crops were not self-supporting in rice and had to import large quantities from South Malabar or Burma. This gave a big fillip to the development of internal marketing. South Malabar on the other hand, with the exception of Calicut raised more paddy than it required and the surplus was exported to North Malabar and to the eastern districts of the Madras province.

An analysis of exports from Calicut port in Malabar shows that between the period 1911-14 and 1923-26,<sup>56</sup> the export of agricultural commodities like coconuts, coir, ginger, pepper, tea and rubber expanded greatly, the percentage increase of exports during this period being 156. In the case of imports, the main single item of import was "grain, pulses and flour" (rice being the predominant commodity in this category); the increase in imports during this period was 165 per cent. This clearly shows that Malabar had developed serious imbalances in the crop pattern which was highly commercialised. It was deficit in

rice, its staple food, and it was forced to rely on rice imports to feed the people.

### MARKETING

Trading in agricultural commodities and the exchange of commodities were well advanced in Malabar in the twentieth century. If we look at the marketing of agricultural products carefully, the position becomes clearer. A report on agricultural marketing by the Collector of Malabar in 1927 observed thus :

It may be stated at the very outset that the existing marketing facilities are hardly to the advantage of the actual producer. They should more or less be characterised as the convenient means of enriching a host of middlemen. It is a well-known fact that between the actual producer and the consumer there are at least five intermediaries, *viz*, (1) the travelling agent of the local merchant, (2) the local merchant, (3) the agent of the wholesale merchant, (4) the wholesale merchant and (5) the local European firms who finally export the product to Europe and other countries which are the actual consumers.

The intermediaries mentioned above merely act as commission agents. . . . It may be mentioned here that the petty merchant who advances money to the ryot does something more than the work of a commission agent. *It is he who prepares the commodities for the market, especially in the case of coconuts which he converts into copra, husks and sometimes coir.*<sup>57</sup>

This description of the marketing of agricultural commodities, particularly of garden products, clearly illustrates the system of marketing introduced by colonialism. As the collector admits :

The prices obtained by the European firms when the product reaches the actual consumers, must be exceptionally favourable, and it may, without the least exaggeration, be stated that the margin of profit between the rates of the actual producers and the consumers will be nearly cent per cent.<sup>58</sup>

In the case of paddy, the system of marketing was such that paddy was bought from the cultivators by petty merchants or their agents—the Mappillas were the main traders who transported the produce to the market town where they sold it to local merchants. The peasant's share of the produce was normally sold immediately after the harvest, while the landlord was able to hold his stocks till the price position improved.<sup>59</sup> Usury by the local trader entered in the following way : Normally a sum of money was advanced to the peasant for cultivation expenses at an usurious rate of interest, and at the time of harvest the peasant was forced to sell at a rate far below the prevailing price. In paddy transactions, the petty merchants themselves conducted these transactions on borrowed capital. Barter was virtually non-existent.

It must also be noted that among the districts of Madras province, Malabar had the largest proportion of population dependent on commerce.<sup>66</sup> This along with the extensive spread of petty trade and shop-

keeping indicate the growing role of commodity production and a growing monetisation.

### FORCES OF PRODUCTION

The productive forces in Malabar agriculture did not make any significant headway during the period of our study, despite the development of commercial agriculture. The use of the wooden plough was universal. The bullock and the buffalo continued to be used to draw the plough, the buffalo being confined to areas where there were pools of water all through the year, and was therefore found more common in South Malabar. The introduction of the small iron plough, even where it was feasible, was not of much use with the poor quality of cattle available.<sup>61</sup> The emaciated quality of the cattle was underlined by many British observers as one of the worst features in Malabar presidency. One result of the growth of commercial crops like coconuts was that the grazing of cattle was severely restricted and "they are underfed and practically starved during the dry season . . ."<sup>62</sup>

In the case of other technological aids to cultivation, the Department of Agriculture propagated the use of fertilisers such as oil-cakes, fish and bone-meal, but the Department's report of 1926-27 states that

the cost of oil-cakes, fish and bone-meal is so high, owing to export demands, that in many cases it does not pay the ryot to increase his outturn by such an addition to his expenses.<sup>63</sup>

The report quotes Rs 150 as the price per ton of fish manure in 1926-27. The resettlement officer found fish manure used in coastal desams, but to only a limited extent.

Malabar with its greenery and rainfall provided a deceptive appearance of agricultural prosperity, its productive forces particularly its technological level, belied the appearance. Irrigation was a totally neglected factor: the British colonial policy deliberately ignored the irrigational potential and needs of Malabar, the abundant rainfall being the stock excuse for the neglect of public irrigation works. However, as it was clearly noted in the numerous gazetteers, the abundant rainfall, unless it came at the proper times for the *kanni* and *magaram* crops, played havoc with production on the wetlands. The south-west monsoon had never been known to fail in Malabar, but its timing is crucial.<sup>64</sup> No public expenditure was made on any irrigation project in Malabar, except for an irrigation project in Malabar (an anicut) which was erected at private expense and taken over in the late thirties by the Government. The agricultural returns for Madras province did not have any entry for area irrigated and crops irrigated for Malabar during the period under study. The waters of Malabar rivers were also unharnessed. The investigation in 1926 for the Malampuzha Reservoir Project in Palghat taluk (intended to irrigate 40,000 acres for fifteen days after the south-west monsoon, and for fortyfive days after the north-east monsoon) was indefinitely postponed.<sup>65</sup>

In 1935 there were only 24 oil engines with pumps for irrigation purposes in Malabar, as against 217 and 145 in Krishna and Thanjavur districts. There were 12 electric pumps for tubewells in Malabar, compared with 58 and 65 in Krishna and Thanjavur.<sup>66</sup> As for tractors, it is at first puzzling to note that there were 160 tractors in operation in Malabar in 1935. The figure is understandable only if we remember that most of them must have been in use then in the tea plantations of Wynad. Most probably in the case of oil and electric pumps also, a large proportion was utilised in the plantations.

This low state of the productive forces was reflected in the low level of production. The data on production of paddy reveal a trend of stagnancy.

Estimated Production of Rice from 1924-25 to 1944-45 :<sup>67</sup>

Year	('000 tons)	Year	('000 tons)
1924-25	490	1936-37	496
1927-28	523	1939-40	463
1930-31	539	1942-43	505
1933-34	526	1944-45	450

The low level of agricultural productivity resulting from the stagnation of the forces of production is reflected in average yield per acre for paddy in Malabar. The per acre yield was only 1400 lbs—the lowest in Madras province.<sup>68</sup>

### INDUSTRY

A description of the state of industry in Malabar would be useful in supplementing our study of agrarian relations. We have not attempted a detailed enquiry into the state of industrial development in Malabar. However, two conclusions emerge clearly : (1) The industries which developed in Malabar were predominantly extractive, the majority being based on small-scale commodity production. There were no capital goods industries; (2) There was an extensive spread of cottage industries producing commodities for the market, but these did not develop to the higher stage of factory industry.

In 1926 the break-up of the 63 factory industries was as follows : textiles 6, engineering 3, chemical dyes, etc 2, minerals and metals nil, food drink and tobacco 22, processes relating to food, stone and glass 20, rope works 6, government and local fund factories 3. Under engineering two out of the three factories listed were railway workshops.<sup>69</sup>

According to the definition adopted by the Indian Factories Act 1911, in 1926 there were 63 factories in Malabar, employing a total of 10,570 workers. By 1933 there were 79 factories employing 11,907; and in 1934 the number of industrial workers was 11,777.<sup>70</sup> These figures reflect the weak development of the industrial proletariat. But compared with other districts, it cannot be said that Malabar was noticeably more backward in this respect.

The development of factory industry using up to date machinery and concentration of industrial workers did not, however, eliminate the

vast hinterland of cottage and small commodity production. In the textile industry in particular the various stages of commodity production, accumulation of capital and the sway of capital over labour power are strikingly evident. In 1930 there were about 12,000 looms, of which about 4500 were fitted with flyshuttles (mainly in organised handloom weaving factories).

... the peculiar feature of the industry in Malabar is that there exists side by side all stages of the industry—the ordinary weaver with his handloom, a little advanced weaver with his loom fitted with fly-shuttle, the well organised handloom factories and the powerloom factories.<sup>71</sup>

In the case of coir, as we noted earlier, the petty merchants/traders who bought the coconuts, let out the husks to be beaten, to peasant women on a contract basis (putting out system); much of the coir produced in Malabar and in Kerala continues to be so put out. The coir industry in Malabar showed in essence the unity of rural industry and agricultural production which is so typical of precapitalist societies.

With the growing pauperisation and expropriation of the peasantry, there was no rapid development of industry which could have drawn away the surplus population from the land. This contributed greatly to the economic stagnation and decay of Malabar society.

### CONCLUSION

The features we have studied were broadly characteristic of the development of agrarian relations in the rest of India under British imperialism. In this study we have taken up the specific forms of transformation and interaction with the concrete conditions obtaining in Malabar society. The contradictions manifested by these developments led to tremendous strain and conflict within the social structure of Malabar. With the increasing burden of rent, indebtedness, alienation from the land and eviction, the Malabar peasantry was rapidly impoverished. Thousands of peasant families faced economic ruin and the inexorable decay of precapitalist relations affected every class in Malabar society. The traditional family and social alignments; the *marumakkatayam* system of *tarawad* family and property, the caste structure which provided a stubborn internal solidity to the decaying society, the feudal allegiances of *kana-jammam maryada* which had mediated the relations between the lord and serf and the relations of feudal ties between exploiter and exploited—all these reached an advanced stage of dissolution by the 1920s.

All these intolerable contradictions developing in the society found their focus in the oppressive *jenmi* system which, in an altered form, still provided the underpinnings for the whole complex of precapitalist relations and hindered the development of new productive forces. Malabar became an area of economic stagnation, but certain relations of production had emerged which found the precapitalist edifice stifling. Rumblings

of lower castes against upper caste domination became more and more evident; within the upper castes, newly emerging classes fought to overthrow the relations which hindered their free development; the impact of all-India nationalism drew the Malabar petty-bourgeoisie into the vortex of the anti-imperialist struggle. The fight against imperialism and the fight against precapitalist domination progressed simultaneously. The years of depression worsened the economic situation and further undermined the foundations of the old social alignments. Malabar was ripe for revolt and the ferment exploded in the Malabar Rebellion of 1921 which put the Moplah peasantry in the forefront of the anti-imperialist struggle.

<sup>29</sup> *Report of the Malabar Tenancy Committee (M T C)*, 1940, p 17.

<sup>30</sup> Mac Ewen, *Resettlement Scheme Report for the eight Plain Taluks of the Malabar District*, p 44.

<sup>31</sup> *Report of the Settlement of the Land Revenue* of the districts of Madras Presidency for the respective years.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, for 1930-31, Vol 11, p 17.

<sup>33</sup> E M S Namoodiripad, (pseud. S Parameswaran), *The Peasant Question in Kerala*, Bombay 1951, p 18.

<sup>34</sup> Government of Madras, Revenue Department 1927, G O No 1389, dated 18 July, 1927, Trivandrum Secretariat.

<sup>35</sup> *M T C Report 1927-28*, Vol 1, p 26.

<sup>36</sup> T C Varghese, *Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences : Land Tenures in Kerala 1850-1960*, Calcutta 1970, p 210.

<sup>37</sup> Malabar District topped consistently in the volume of law suits filed in the courts of the districts of Madras Presidency; See *Madras Administration Reports*, section on *Civil Justice* from 1924-25 to 1945-46. Malabar alone accounted for one-seventh of the total suits in the Presidency for 1934-35.

<sup>38</sup> The source for the two tables given in the text are: *MTC Report 1927-28*, Vol 1, p 31; Government of Madras, Revenue Department 1947 : G O No 1835, 12 August 1947, Trivandrum Secretariat.

<sup>39</sup> By a *melcharth*, the jenmi could lease out the land to a third party for a higher sum, or a submortgage, which led to the dispossession of the existing tenant. For statistics of *melcharths* quoted, see *MTC Reports 1927-28*, Vol 1, p 68.

<sup>40</sup> W R S Satyanathan, *Report on Agricultural Indebtedness*, Government of Madras 1936.

<sup>41</sup> William Logan, *Malabar Land Tenure Report*, Malabar Special Commission, pp 23,24.

<sup>42</sup> *Census of India 1921*, Madras, Vol 13, Part 11, Table 18.

<sup>43</sup> Mac Ewen, *op. cit.*, p 35.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Quoted by Charles Innes in *Notes on the Malabar Tenancy Legislation*, Government of Madras, Revenue Department, G O No 3021, dated 26 September 1917, p 26, Tamil Nadu Archives (T A).

<sup>46</sup> Mac Ewen, *op. cit.*, p 36.

<sup>47</sup> W R S Satyanathan, *op. cit.*, pp 38-39.

<sup>48</sup> Marx pointed out: "The characteristic forms, however, in which usurer's capital exists in periods antedating capitalist production are of two kinds . . . . These two forms are : *first*, usury by lending money to extravagant members of the upper classes, particularly landowners; *secondly*, usury by lending money to small producers. . . .", *Capital*, Vol 3, Moscow 1959, p 531.

<sup>49</sup> Mac Ewen, *op. cit.*, p 36.

<sup>50</sup> J Gray, Report of Special officer to report on the position of the agricultural classes . . . , Government of Madras, G O No 2941, Revenue, 12 August 1918.

- <sup>51</sup> *M T C Report 1927-28*, Vol 1, Annexure.
- <sup>52</sup> *Census of India 1921*, *op cit.*, Table 17; *Census of India 1931*, Madras, Vol 14, Table 10.
- <sup>53</sup> Government of Madras, Revenue Department, G O No 2941, dated 12 August 1918.
- <sup>54</sup> Government of Madras, Revenue Department : Statistics—Agriculture—Complete returns for respective years, T A.
- <sup>55</sup> Mac Ewen, *op cit.*, p 25.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix iii
- <sup>57</sup> Government of Madras, Development Department, G O No 1324, dated 26 August 1927, T A.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>60</sup> *Census of India 1931*, Vol 4, Report, Part 1, p 202.
- <sup>61</sup> The Agricultural Report of 1926-27 stated that in the case of an improved plough recommended by the department : "Even this small iron plough cannot become an implement in use for wet ploughing unless the general condition of the cattle is improved." See Mac Ewen, *op cit.*, p 9.
- <sup>62</sup> Charles Innes and F B Ewans, *Malabar Gazetteer*, Vol 1, Madras 1951, p 215.
- <sup>63</sup> Mac Ewen, *op cit.*, p 8.
- <sup>64</sup> *Statistical Atlas of Malabar 1931* for description of the agricultural practices and dependency on rainfall, chapter 10.
- <sup>65</sup> *Malabar Gazetteer*, *op cit.*, p 209.
- <sup>66</sup> Government of Madras, Revenue Department, G O No 636, dated 20 March 1936 (T A) for data given in this paragraph.
- <sup>67</sup> S Y Krishnaswamy, *Rural Problems in Madras: a monograph*, Madras 1947, Appendix No 14.
- <sup>68</sup> Report of the special officer for the investigation of Land tenures, May 1947, Madras 1950, p 28.
- <sup>69</sup> Government of Madras, Development Department, G O No 915, dated 23 June 1927, (T A) Statement 11.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, Statement, 111.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, No 1645 Miscellaneous series dated 28 September 1930 (T A).
- <sup>72</sup> Sufficient attention has not been paid to aspects of the social structure, as it is beyond the scope of this article, but its relevance to our discussion should not be under-estimated. Some of these aspects will be dealt with in the later part of our study.

## NOTES

### *The Politics of Food*

CONTINUING famine in rural areas and intermittent food riots in urban centres has been a main spectre of Indian history after independence. Even after twentyfive years of planned development, a considerable section of our population, especially in the rural areas, continues to subsist on bark, leaves, flowers and roots for months together in a year.

Data on expenditure levels, pattern of consumption, and so on, give a vivid account of the extent of hunger in this country. Thus, according to the Dandekar and Rath study,<sup>1</sup> in 1960-61, more than 33.12 per cent of the rural population and 50 per cent of the urban population were facing chronic starvation. They have estimated that in 1961 out of the total 434 million population, 356 million lived in rural and 78 million lived in urban areas. The monthly per capita expenditure was found to be Rs 0.8 per month (27 paise per day) for 6.38 per cent of the rural population, and for another 11.95 per cent it was Rs 8-11. The figures for the corresponding expenditure brackets for the urban population were found to be 2.5 per cent and 5.4 per cent.

Proceeding accordingly it was found that in rural areas more than 60 per cent of the total expenditure is on cereal and starchy food substitutes such as tapioca; and another 18 per cent was on other items of food such as pulses, edible oils and so forth, constituting more than 80 per cent of the expenditure of the lowest expenditure brackets. Now, considering the consumption pattern of this group a few salient facts emerge.

Calculating at the rate of 3.3 calories per gramme of cereal foodgrains, (including substitutes) 616 grammes of foodgrains give 2033 calories per capita per day. Considering that another 20 per cent of the per capita expenditure is on pulses, edible oil, etc, yielding a calory equivalent of 200, the total calory intake is 2250 calories per day per person, which is the rock bottom level for sheer existence according to any

standards. According to Dandekar and Rath since for the first four lowest brackets, covering about 38 per cent of the rural population, this expenditure is beyond reach, it is estimated that they are then living in chronic starvation, or what is commonly known as below the 'poverty line'.

It is again envisaged that for the urban population to reach this calory consumption level, a monthly per capita expenditure of Rs 24-28 is necessary. Since the first eight lowest brackets lie below this, it follows that more than 50 per cent of them are also below the 'poverty line'.

This study has been based on the National Sample Survey Reports at 1960-61 prices. The sweeping changes that shook this country thereafter, especially during the last three years, cannot be assessed owing to lack of data. However, the result of a study<sup>2</sup> which takes into account the price level up to 1968-69, has indicated that 54 per cent of the rural population is below the poverty line.

It is against this background that the food policy of the Congress Government must be assessed. An ideal and permanent solution to this problem entails radical programmes including basic reforms in land ownership and re-orientation of the price-income policies, which precisely because of its class character, the present government, cannot accomplish. Instead, the country is time and again treated with populist slogans regarding procurement, distribution, etc. Therefore, our main endeavour in this note is to highlight how government policy is tailored to enrich a microscopic minority of landlords and capitalist farmers, amidst mass poverty.

### *Assessment of Surplus*

Taking our data from the National Sample Survey 1960-61 about the pattern of land ownership, it is found that the three top layers of landowners, whose numerical strength is only 12 per cent in terms of the total farming households, have a monopoly of 60 per cent of the cultivable land in this country (see Table 1). Considering that their dietary habits are more diversified (less in favour of cereals), it is clear that they are in possession of a substantial amount of surplus which could easily be mopped up by compulsory procurement.

If we calculate the consumption at 700 grammes per day per adult for the peasantry owning above one acre wet, or 2.5 acre dry land (30 million households and 120 million people), the net requirement of the farming community, per annum is 30 million tonnes. Leaving another 10 million tonnes in their hands for seeds and other ploughing-back, the net surplus in the year 1972-73 (estimated production 100 million tonnes) will be 60 million tonnes. This is sufficient to feed the 440 million non-farming population including those with holdings of less than one acre wet or 2.5 acre dry at the rate of approximately 450 grammes of cereals and 50 grammes of pulse per day per adult.

TABLE 1

Nature of holding	No of Households (in millions)	Acres held (in millions)	No of Households as percentage of total farming households	Acres held as percentage of total acreage under farming	Acres per household
30 Acres and above	1.58	79.28	2.3	24.4	50
30-20 Acres	1.69	41.14	2.4	12.7	24.2
20-10 Acres	5.5	75.39	7.9	23.2	13.7
10-5 Acres	9.37	65.95	13.5	20.3	7.0
5-2.5 Acres	11.15	40.68	16.0	12.5	3.6
2-5.1 Acres	10.79	18.26	15.5	5.6	1.7
Below 1 Acre	29.41	4.34	42.3	1.3	0.15

Source : National Sample Survey 1960-61.

But the government's apathy in imposing a producer levy and compulsorily procuring the surplus, clearly indicates the basic content of its class policy.

### Pricing Policy

An analysis of the pricing policy of the government brings out the essence of these policies. It is widely acknowledged that the productivity in agriculture has increased in certain areas, especially with the onset of the so-called green revolution. A survey undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture with the co-operation of Agricultural universities and Agro-Economic centres has given an estimate of the cost of production, the details of which are summed up in Table 2.

TABLE 2  
COST OF PRODUCTION OF WHEAT (Rs/ per quintal)

Cost of concept	Haryana	Punjab	Western UP
A <sub>1</sub>	21.13	29.02	19.48
A <sub>2</sub>	21.59	31.37	19.64
B	40.62	53.22	42.34
C	49.53	59.71	49.68

A<sub>1</sub>. Hired human labour, bullock labour, machine labour, seed, manures, fertilisers, pesticides, irrigation, depreciation in implements and farm building, interest on crop loans and other working capital, land revenue and other taxes and miscellaneous items such as payments to artisan etc.

A<sub>2</sub>. A<sub>1</sub> + rent paid on leased in land

B. A<sub>2</sub> + rental value of owned land + interest on owned fixed capital (excluding land)

C. B + imputed value of family labour.

Source : Agricultural Prices Commission Report, 1974-75

Another survey undertaken for Muzaffarnagar and Bijanore in Western UP, showed that the cost of production per acre is Rs 625. The study estimated the yield at 12 quintals per acre, which is a gross underestimate. Similarly the survey calculated the wage bill for the 50 man-days involved at Rs 5 per day, whereas the actual payment in this area is only between Rs 3-4 per day. Therefore, calculating the yield at 15 quintals per acre and computing the wage rate at Rs 4 per day, the cost of production per quintal of wheat is Rs 38.33 as against the Rs 52 estimated. This study excludes the rental value of the land owned, but includes interest on fixed capital (a pair of bullocks valued at Rs 2000) at Rs 25 per acre.

However, the calculation of the cost of production and yield has created much controversy in certain quarters. It is emphasised that the yield per acre would not exceed 10 quintals and it is argued that most of the calculations, made by the Punjab Government are based on a yield of 9 quintals per acre. Here are the figures for the yield.

TABLE 3  
AVERAGE YIELD OF WHEAT (QUINTALS PER HECTARE)

Year	Punjab	Haryana	All India
1965-66	44.49	—	39.61
1966-67	55.33	53.23	36.82
1967-68	55.05	56.39	41.78
1968-69	—	—	—
1969-70	42.10	50.20	40.70
1970-71	42.00	47.68	40.80
1971-72	40.85	50.55	45.01

Source : Report of All India Co-ordinated Project on National Demonstration, ICAR New Delhi.

Calculating input costs at controlled rates is also contested. However, conceding that there is a scarcity of inputs, and even calculating this at blackmarket rates, there is enough evidence to conclude that the present per acre yield of wheat more than offsets the increased cost of inputs and leaves a handsome margin of profits.

Another study has calculated the cost of cultivation for paddy in Krishna Delta in Andhra Pradesh. The study excludes rental value of owned land, but includes depreciation on fixed investments. The cost covers also the subsidiary crop raised for which additions and deductions are made wherever necessary. It was found that for one acre of land, the cost of production was Rs 585. Calculating the yield at the rate of 15 quintals per acre, the cost per quintal is found to be Rs 39. If we maintain that the yield cannot be more than 12 quintals per acre, then it must be pointed out that the wage for labour is calculated at the rate of Rs 5 per day whereas the actual payment in this area is only Rs 3 per day. Thus the cost of production at revised rates will still be round about Rs 39.

It is against these scientific calculations of the cost, that the pricing policy of the government must be evaluated. Ever since the inception of the Agricultural Prices Commission (APC) in 1966, it has been working on two basis namely support price and procurement price. The support price is supposed to ensure the farmer a reasonable price including the cost of production and a nominal profit on unit cost of production. It also acts as an insurance against any glut in market. The procurement price on the other hand is kept high under the plea that the government intends to appropriate a part of the surplus. The fact is that, in many years in the past, the Food and Agricultural Ministry has always announced a price, far higher than the procurement price, recommended by the APC. The APC has recommended the procurement price for wheat to be fixed at Rs 68 per quintal uniformly throughout the country for indigeneous red variety and Rs 74 quintal for indigeneous common white and Mexican varieties. But the Chief Ministers' Conference on April 13, 1972 decided to raise this price to Rs 74 for red wheat and Rs 76 per quintal for all other varieties. This year despite the fact that the whole-sale wheat trade was taken over, thereby implying that the government is the principal purchaser, a support price was announced last month of Rs 80 per quintal for red variety and Rs 85 quintal for Mexican varieties. The procurement price for wheat which is to be announced at the time of the marketing season is likely to be between Rs 90 to Rs 100. This must be compared to the cost of production per quintal of wheat already dealt with above.

However, in discussing the price of wheat, a few more facts must be mentioned. In the past when the open market prices were too low, the government had been using the procurement and support price as a device to support the so-called farmer, in fact, the landlord. But in years of acute shortage the government used the same weapon to enrich the landlords and the procurement prices were always drastically revised upwards under the plea that if the latter did not have some relation to the market price, there would be large scale diversion of foodgrains to the blackmarkets. We feel that this policy is inconsistent with any logic of economics but follows from the reactionary economic and political set-up in this country.

For sometime in the past, the APC has been against the artificial level at which wheat procurement prices are maintained. To quote APC Report :

At present wheat procured at Rs 76 per quintal is issued out of the Union Government stock at Rs 78 per quintal. The difference, however, covers no more than a fraction of the costs and charges involved in procurement, distribution and carrying of the stocks of the grain amounting respectively to Rs 11 and Rs 7 and Rs 8 per quintal. So far a good part of this loss could be met out of the cushion available in the lower economic cost of imported wheat. . . . The cushion available in the lower economic cost of imported wheat, however, has

tended to shrink with a progressive increase in the portion of the domestic wheat in the basket of public distribution. The Commission has consequently been advocating a phased adjustment in the procurement and issue price of the grain.

A step albeit partial was taken in this direction in 1970 when the issue price of white and amber varieties of domestic wheat was raised from Rs 78 to Rs 84 per quintal. While differentiation thus brought about . . . was in consonance with the recommendation of the Commission made in the previous Report . . . the recommendation with regard to adjustment in the procurement price remained ignored.

Even with this adjustment in the issue price, however, if the losses are to be escaped in 1971, the procurement price would need to be considerably reduced or else, the issue price would have to be further raised. To illustrate, if the total quantity of the wheat to be distributed from out of the Government stock in 1971 is assumed to be only 4.5 million tonnes and the import component 40 per cent of this quantity, the procurement price would need to be lowered to about Rs 63 per quintal.<sup>3</sup>

The *Fifth Plan Approach Document* also speaks in the same vein :

The greater part of the marketable surplus of agricultural produce is contributed by substantial farmers. They naturally benefit most from high agricultural prices. A proper income policy, therefore, requires that all pressures for fixing procurement prices at a level higher than what would be reasonably remunerative to farmers must be resisted. . . . High procurement prices will mean either an excessive price for the consumers or a heavy burden of subsidy on the budget. In the first case it would upset the prices-wages-incomes balance and in the second cut into resources needed for development.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, this privileged level at which wheat prices are maintained have some other implications also. In the language of the APC, the wheat procurement price is higher than the cost of production. The high prices induces among the farming community to wheat alone. Therefore, a reduction in prices will enable to shift from wheat to other cereals, for the country needs not only wheat, but also cotton oilseeds, sugarcane and pulses.<sup>5</sup> However, we cannot accede to a policy of uniform procurement price for all the farmers. While we agree with the APC that for big landlords there is the need for lowering price, for small and marginal farmers a differential pricing system must be worked out such that it enables him to maintain a good standard of living.

It seems that wheat is the principle index of price determination of farm products in this country. Every time when the APC makes its recommendations, it strongly argues for an increase in the price of coarse grains on the assumption that some kind of parity has to be maintained to prevent any explosive acreage shifts. This year it seems that the Commission's view has been maintained and as such an increase in procurement price, from Rs 60 to 72 for bajra, Rs 58 to 70 for maize and Rs 58

to 70 for jowar per quintal, had been accepted for the 1973-74 season. Similarly for paddy, an unprecedented increase from Rs 49-58 to 83-95.25 range has been accepted. In the same way in last June the APC increased the minimum statutory price for jute, sugar and cotton. The mainstay of the Commission's argument in increasing the prices—precisely because of the political leadership's reluctance to bring down wheat prices—has been the pull of wheat since it commanded technological advantage and profitability. This was supposed to save acreage shifts in favour of wheat.

The sluggishness in the production of pulses can be explained very much in terms of wheat prices. In 1964-65, pulses accounted for 13.7 per cent of the foodgrains produced in this country. In 1970-71, it stood at 10.7 per cent. The assault on pulse production was very much in the wheat growing 'green revolution' areas. Over a period from 1964-65 to 1970-71, the area under pulses had declined at the rate of 49.7 per cent in Punjab, 17.7 per cent in UP and 14.9 per cent in Haryana and the production decreased by 55.8 per cent, 16.5 per cent and 14.9 per cent respectively. Because of the sacrosanct wheat policy of the government this is likely to continue. In irrigated areas, because of the high profits of wheat growing, the pulse growing farmers switch over to wheat. It is reported that in Ganga Nagar, Rajasthan, gram will be substituted by wheat, when water from the Rajasthan Canal became available. In UP all pulse growing farms equipped with tubewells have switched over to wheat. Of course, it goes without saying that the deteriorating production trend in pulses has an effect on its prices. The open market price for gram is now Rs 140 per quintal.

### *Fiscal and Monetary Policies*

We have already discussed the price differential between procurement and issue prices. When concessional imports under PL 480 were available, cheap imported grain was issued at the same price as the high cost domestic grain and the gain out of this was used to alleviate the losses. But when concessional imports were phased out, the government was confronted with a set of problems. As the APC puts it, there were three ways of solving this, namely, lowering procurement price, increasing the issue price, or keeping both intact and increasing the food subsidy. Because of the political impossibility of lowering procurement price, the government substantially increased the issue price while keeping its options wide open for increased food subsidy through deficit financing. It is widely known how deficit financing will erode the living standards of the working population and the government's opting for it was not without reason. Since an increase beyond a point in issue price will be directly and immediately understood by the people, the government wisely proposed to apply a concealed weapon of food subsidy. It is estimated that at the present rate of procurement price, the subsidy may well cross over Rs 350 crores level. This is in addition to the increase in issue price that has already been announced.

Apart from the long-term effect of deficit financing, vis-a-vis food subsidy, as it operates within the bourgeois-landlord state framework, it has an immediate impact on the level of money supply and prices. It is estimated, that to procure a mere 7 million tonnes of grains, a credit expansion of Rs 800 crores is necessary which is immediately transferred to the landlords in the form of spot cash. Sometime back, the APC had the 'temerity' to propose a deferred payment scheme, but nothing was done on this. On the contrary to make matters worse, the banks have, from last June onwards, increased the rate of interest on advances for food procurement from 8.5 to 9 per cent.

In addition to this, there is enough evidence to suggest that the nationalised banking system in this country plays a role in making the food situation worse. The way in which it operates with private trade is a case in point. Though there is a Selective Credit Control Scheme with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) according to which all advances against sensitive commodities such as foodgrains, oil seeds, vegetable oils and so on attract 12 per cent interest, the RBI liberalised the credit control scheme during the last busy season on all sensitive commodities. In a period of widespread shortage it is profitable to hoard even if the interest is 12 per cent—thus the RBI was encouraging the blackmarketeers through its policies.

It must also be constated that the banks have resorted to an excess credit creation when more stringent monetary and credit policies were the need of the hour. In the last 1972-73 season, total bank credit to the commercial sector rose to Rs 1037 crores compared to 935 crores in 1971-72 and 721 crores in 1970-71. In the face of the sluggishness in procurement and widespread industrial stagnation, it is not certain as to how the RBI could pump this much money into the economy. However, the RBI Governor's letter to scheduled commercial banks gives a clue—in May 1973 the Governor has accepted that there was excessive use of bank credit to build up inventories and stockpiling commodities in short supply.

This is the pricing and monetary policy of the Congress Government purposely tailored to pander to the landlords and blackmarketeers. If one accepts the government version that the high procurement price reflects an earnest effort on its part to appropriate the surplus, the facts about quantity of grain procured gives no validity to this reasoning. Having procured 8.86 million tonnes, or 9.3 per cent of the net domestic production in 1971, the present figures are 4.4 million tonnes and 4.4 per cent respectively.

The Government's inability to procure enough grain cannot be explained in terms of the scarcity of foodgrains. In per capita terms, the output of foodgrains in this country is in no way less than in China. But that country has no problem of procurement, for the reason that it does not have to worry about the social and political overheads in mopping up grain from surplus areas. Here however the situation is different. The

Congress party leaders admit that a majority of their party members are themselves holders of surplus grain and as such it could not initiate a policy which touches its interests. In the last Working Committee session of the Congress, when the monopoly procurement and producer levy question came under discussion, the West Bengal Chief Minister Sidhartha Shankar Ray had warned that in that case, the Army would have to be called in to assist the civil authorities and the centre would have to declare President's rule in all states. A table indicating procurement target and actual amount procured is provided alongside.

PROCUREMENT POSITION ON 20TH JULY 1973  
(1973-74 Rabi Season, '000 Metric Tonnes)

State	Target	Actual	State	Target	Actual
Assam	20	0.8	MP	400	191.1
Bihar	600	49.1	Punjab	3300	2575.8
Gujarat	150	Negligible	Rajasthan	300	144.8
Haryana	1300	564.5	UP	1800	750.4
Himachal	60	1.8	West Bengal	100	0.3
J&K	40	17.1	Delhi	30	0.2
Orissa	18	0.3	Chandigarh	—	0.3
Maharashtra	—	11.0	Total	8118	4307.5

Source : Lok Sabha debates.

### *Wholesale Trade Takeover*

The class approach of the ruling party in the procurement of surplus grain is well demonstrated in the experience of the so-called wholesale trade takeover. Announced with much fanfare, this step was supposed to librate the *garibs* from the grip of the wholesale trader. But it was done with the most careful homework to protect the interests of the wholesale trader and any confrontation with the landlords was neatly avoided. Because of this class nature of the programme and the half hearted way in which it was put through, the measure did much damage to the procurement agencies which otherwise could have procured a good amount of grain. In the main, because the partial intervention of the government in the trade was confined to wheat only, the blackmarketeers and profiteers could now divert part of their resources to *hoard* in coarse grains.

Now a new area was opened to the wholesale trade to speculate in coarse grains. It also gave a good cover to carry on the 'clandestine' trading in wheat. The impact on prices of coarse grains was considerable. In May this year, for example, the price of gram and barley ranged between Rs 1.30 to Rs 1.40 and Rs 1 to Rs 1.10 per kg respectively, in Punjab and Haryana, as against Rs 0.80 and Rs 0.50 last year. Moreover, the producer was allowed to continue his sales to retailers at exorbitantly high prices. This considerably reduced the flow of grains to

procurement agencies. With the active connivance of the wholesale trader the 'farmer' thus developed the capacity to withhold supplies.

In this background it is no wonder that the government failed to achieve its target of procurement of 8 million tonnes. Instead of suitably revising its procurement and monetary policies to meet the challenge, the government as guided by its pro-landlord policy, used this opportunity to enrich this class by pumping more money into their hands in the rabi crash programme, bonus scheme, etc to the tune of Rs 150 crores. We would further point out that, even where programmes and policies are well-defined, problems relating to surplus, procurement and pricing cannot be solved without the active co-operation of the people. The successful implementation of the unified procurement and marketing scheme in China required the entry of the political cadres into the countryside, the classification of the producers into poor, middle and rich categories in order to carry through different strategies for all these sections.

### *Food Imports*

The political compulsion of the ruling class in India to ally with the feudal and semi-feudal classes, drives it more and more into the camp of imperialism. Accordingly, food imports were negotiated and arranged from the US on term payment. For the government, imports were necessitated by its procurement failure. Besides, the government was relieved from making domestic purchases involving spot cash. Because of the outwardly strained relations between the US and India, the latter approached the US through the Aid India Consortium in June last, and the response was warm. This, of course, involves the risk of wire-pulling of this country's foreign and domestic policies by US, especially our policy viz-a-viz Pakistan. Hence our view is that the failure of the bourgeoisie in India to confront its feudal partner leads to its compromise with imperialism. It must be remembered thus that, this is to protect the interest of the landlords, hoarders, and speculators, and all this is happening in a year when the production at home is hundred million tonnes.

Having miserably failed to procure grain in this way the public distribution system also collapsed. Ration quotas were considerably slashed in many places. The public distribution system has so far does not covered even one third of the population. About 40 per cent of the fair price shops are accounted for by Kerala, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Gujarat. The whole policy of the government is to procure that much amount of grain which is sufficient to distribute in problem areas, mainly urban centres, leaving the people in the rural areas to fend themselves and the most optimistic estimate of the government has never crossed the fifteen million tonnes mark which is sufficient to cover a population of just hundred million.

On the other hand, the issue price of grains distributed through fair price

shops has also been increased. Quantitatively the rise has been conspicuous in the case of coarse grains and rice. In the case of rice, the issue price went up from Rs 58-70 in 1966-67 to 120-160 in 1973-74 per quintal. In comparison to this stand the issue price of wheat which has registered an increase from Rs 55 to 78-84 during 1966-67 to 1972-73. The consumer of coarse grains and rice pays a price including distributive costs and margins, the consumer of wheat pays a subsidised price. A major part of the food subsidy has been spent on wheat whose percentage in the foodgrains production is roughly only 20 per cent.

An elaborate public distribution system of grains and other essential commodities of mass consumption has been accorded a crucial role in the Fifth Plan. But the present management of the food economy seems to undercut this assumption. The rice trade takeover has been abandoned. Apart from this, from the present indications it seems that the food portfolio is shifting from the Centre to states. It is reported that there will be state food corporations and the practice of the entire surplus mopped up by the states going to the central pool is likely to be abandoned. As such the centre will distribute, whatsoever is available to it, equitably among deficit states.

All these clearly indicate that the Congress party cannot bring about an iota of change in this country. Of course, certain populist slogans were mouthed when the ruling classes found that it could no longer fool the people in the old way while the class alliances remained the same. The failure on the food front, especially of the wheat trade takeover clearly proves that without a change at the roots of the political and economic structure, such policies ably carried out by people's democracies in other countries cannot succeed here. The rise in prices of wheat and coal after its nationalisation is a glaring example of this.

GEORGE THOMAS

<sup>1</sup> V M Dandekar and Neelakant Rath, "Poverty in India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol VI, No 1-2, Bombay 1971.

<sup>2</sup> Pranab K Bardhan, "On the Incidence of Poverty in Rural India", *EPW*, Annual Number 1973.

<sup>3</sup> *Agricultural Prices Commission Report*, Government of India, 1971-72, pp 5-11.

<sup>4</sup> *Approach to the Fifth Plan*, Government of India, New Delhi 1973, p 53.

<sup>5</sup> *APC Report*, *op. cit.*

## SYMPOSIUM

### *Class Character of State Power in India*

S NAQVI, differing from the conclusions of the Second All-India Conference on "The Class Character of State Power in India", has presented an alternative analysis (*Social Scientist*, August 1973) which depicts the state as being a wholly bourgeois state; deduces from this a very confused strategy for the Indian revolution, and, with some misgivings, in the end pleads that his position should not be confused or equated with that of the "all too familiar Trotskyite position of refusal to recognise stages of revolution each with its own pattern of class alignments".

In fact the thesis propounded, far from being Trotskyite in nature, most clearly resembles the right revisionist thesis of the Indian State. When it comes to strategy, a confusion over class alignments, the friends and enemies of the revolution, results in a mixing of the two stages—People's Democratic and Socialist—and a total absence of any reference to the leadership of the revolution. In other words what is presented is an eclecticism which amounts to a variant of the right reformist position on the character of the Indian state, with a theoretical component of the ultra-left.

The central defect of the analysis, in our opinion, lies in the total confusion on the question of the class composition of the society, and the domination of one section of the bourgeoisie over the state structure. This in turn arises from the failure to identify and correctly assess the primary and essential features of the Indian economy, classes and the state, and the dialectical interrelationships between them. Hence the entire strategy goes wrong. The root of this failure must be sought in Naqvi's methodological inconsistency, though in this Naqvi, perhaps, is not alone. There are others in India and abroad, who accept Marxism and Marxist dialectics, but mix up theory with pragmatism, the dialectical interconnection of different aspects of reality with pure empiricism. Apart from the imprecise and unscientific nature of some of his formulations, it is this methodological jumble which makes many of his formulations valid in one context and untenable in another—all in the same article. While a full critique would require joining issue on practically every detail, which is not possible here, we shall try below to take up the main features of Naqvi's analysis to illustrate the main contention of our criticism.

### *Class Character of the State*

Naqvi accepts that the criterion for determining the class character of a given state is basically "in the nature of the system of property ownership in the means of production, and the economic policies pursued by the state". That is to say, he *largely* accepts the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state. But in his analysis of the agrarian situation, he fails to see the dialectics of the historically determined production relations becoming more complex over the last 26 years, because of various material and superstructural factors. Equally significant is the oversimplification of the nature of the relationship between the big bourgeoisie and other strata of the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie.

The state, let us reiterate, is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another, the creation of 'order' which legalises and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between the classes. The characterisation of a state in a given period must then be determined by seeing which class or classes exercise power on the basis of which class or classes own and control the means of production; in the interest of and to the benefit of which class or classes that power is exercised. And hence, what is the overall direction of state policies.

In contradistinction to the Conference analysis that the state in India is a bourgeois-landlord state, led by the big bourgeoisie collaborating with imperialism, Naqvi maintains that the Indian state is

a bourgeois state which essentially functions in the class interest of the bourgeoisie *as a whole*.

and that neither the alliance with the feudal and semi-feudal interests, nor growing collaboration with imperialism, both of which are initially admitted, basically detract from the "bourgeois character of the state".

Thus, according to Naqvi, the state is a *purely* bourgeois state, which functions in the interests of the bourgeoisie *as a whole*, i. e., in the interests of all sections of the bourgeoisie. At the same time, theoretically conceding that

the bourgeois path inexorably leads to an ever-widening process of concentration and centralisation, resulting in the development of monopolies in one sphere after another, ruining and swallowing up small and middle bourgeois elements,

Naqvi chooses to ignore the significance of just such a development of differentiation within the bourgeoisie in the last 26 years, in assessing the question by whom and for whom state power is being exercised. Now, all available data for the plan periods conclusively show that in objective terms, the big bourgeoisie has grown at a faster rate than the middle and small bourgeoisie, and that its stranglehold over the economy is much greater than its direct control over industrial productive resources, in view of the fact that much of the middle and small bourgeoisie is ancillary to it.

Despite scattered references to the differentiation within the bourg-

geoisie and the contradictions between its various sections, these contradictions, according to Naqvi, do not lead to a long-term conflict relationship. This, in our opinion, is oversimplification. No doubt it is a relationship of conflict and compromise, as Naqvi states, but in this relationship, who dominates, who dictates terms? Is not this differentiation between different strata of the bourgeoisie manifested almost every day through the greater and greater grip of monopoly capital on the economic policies of the state? Naqvi does not squarely face this reality, and by-passing it, passes straight over to the 'essence' of the situation. Easy is it then to superficially conclude,

in essence everything is being done to subserve the interests of the bourgeoisie as a class and capitalism as a system of economic and political power (emphasis added).

Hence the overall assessment can be maintained.

But by discounting the emergence and growth to hegemony of the big bourgeoisie in the economy, and hence its leading role in the state, Naqvi fails to understand the need for complete clarity on the role of various classes and sections thereof in the maintenance of the present system, in order to correctly assess the direction of the revolution, against which class, classes or strata of class is the main blow to be struck.<sup>1</sup>

### *Agrarian Structure*

The resort to empiricism, the failure to adopt a consistent Marxist, class approach in determining the composition of the state and the various classes and strata among the peasantry, the consequent failure to identify the essential elements and, in our view, the distortion of reality, are particularly marked in Naqvi's analysis of the agrarian sector, whereby he seeks to substantiate his central theme of the Indian State as a purely bourgeois state.

Firstly, it is mixing up interrelationships with empiricism to test as Naqvi does, the validity of his formulation of a purely bourgeois state, by National Income statistics, i. e., the composition of the state is assessed, not by characterising the system as capitalist, and/or feudal, and/or prefeudal, but by comparing the relative shares of the bourgeoisie, feudals and semi-feudals in the national income. Thus the fact that low productivity in agriculture is an indicator of backwardness largely brought about by the backward, i.e., feudal and semi-feudal production relations, the fact that here it is essentially a question of the correlation of class forces, is sought to be concealed by referring to statistical data. In other words, here Naqvi passes over the *essence* of the problem, leaving the whole question to be defined by just stating that

the extent of this process is a phenomenon (!) which needs to be empirically assessed in order to find out the forms and patterns it assumes and the rate at which it is growing and the impact of forces obstructing the process and a measure of their strength.

Then for Naqvi, the "rich peasants, (kulaks)—new and former feudal or semi-feudal landholders", "the national bourgeoisie", the rich and upper middle farmers", all refer to the same class. What does Naqvi understand by feudal and semi-feudal landholders? By definition a rich peasant is demarcated from the landlord by the fact that, in addition to the wage labour which he hires, he and/or his family members participate in the major agricultural operations through manual labour, whereas the landlord does not, and where production is mainly for the market—but who is also constrained in developing production further by the feudal land monopoly and any other policies which favour the landlord as against the rest of the peasantry. The same confusion is evident in the formulation, "among the rich peasants there has been a constant rise in the proportion of those operating *mainly or wholly* (emphasis added) with wage labour . . .". In accepted Marxian analysis, the rich peasant is distinguished from the middle peasant by the fact of *regular* hiring of wage labour, both annual and seasonal, in addition to his family labour, and the earning of a surplus. Hence the above sentence has no meaning. All rich peasants, except a few, earn a surplus, barring in very bad years. If a rich peasant continuously enlarging his surplus which, after a critical minimum, can be converted into capital, operates *wholly* with wage labour, i.e., ceases using family labour on land, then he ceases to be a rich peasant, and must be defined as a capitalist landlord. While the fate of individuals is not of political significance, clarity on the basis of differentiation within the peasantry is very important for defining strategic goals, the stage of the revolution, and the class alignments corresponding to the stage.

A further formulation speaks of the "rich and upper middle farmers freed from parasitical feudal institutions and imposts". But no peasant, even the rich peasant, is free from parasitical institutions—that is why it is envisaged that as a class, the rich peasant can be won over in the struggle to overthrow landlordism. A more serious mistake arises in the point immediately following the above, where Naqvi speaks not only of the extension of commercial and banking capital into the agrarian economy, but also of "forcing the erstwhile dominant feudal interests to cede social and political power to the bourgeois elements." It is one thing to say that the big bourgeoisie is penetrating into agriculture, but quite another to say that such penetration is forcing the feudals to cede social and political power. The latter implies a process of elimination of the feudal elements. Not only is this objectively wrong, but on so fundamental a point, such an incorrect formulation becomes dangerous.

In fact, it is precisely by losing sight of the totality of correlation of class forces in agriculture that Naqvi comes to giving a partial, one-sided emphasis in his investigation of the agrarian sector. Naqvi highlights only the growth of capitalist relations in agriculture, and misses the fundamental feature of the Indian agrarian economy, *viz.*, that the feudal mode of production persists even where the capitalist mode is penetrating,

i.e., the latter is being super-imposed on the former. Nowhere in the analysis is this basic feature highlighted, or the most important evidence of its existence—the *pattern of concentration and monopoly of land ownership*, where 5 per cent of the top households in the rural side possess as much as 37.29 per cent of the total land under cultivation, against 70 per cent of the peasant families possessing hardly 20 per cent of the cultivated land; a pattern inherited in 1947 and maintained intact over and after 26 years of independent rule. Hence such phenomena as rack-renting, exploitation through payment of destitute wages, usury, discrimination in wage allocations on the basis of caste, sex, denial of access to certain castes and tribes of the use of common tanks, wells and other communal properties, etc, which are nothing but feudal in character. It is precisely the land monopoly which enables landlords to use feudal forms of exploitation.

Just as the overemphasis on growth of capitalist farming obscures the persistence of feudal production relations, so also, as a necessary corollary, does it allow Naqvi to ignore the benefits gained by the feudal/semi-feudal landlord class, from government policies. In assessing who are the beneficiaries of land reforms (who benefits from state policies?), Naqvi's emphasis is on our old friends "the enterprising rich and upper middle farmers", now described as "former tenants of erstwhile feudal landlords" (no longer the 'former feudal and semi-feudal landholders', and 'apparently not a 'new' feudal either)—with only a passing reference to the *old feudal landowners themselves*. It is the former who are singled out:

The rich and upper middle farmers thus have been minting gold and expanding their area of operation by acquiring more land and undertaking ancillary industrial activities.<sup>2</sup>

To talk of the new rich only as minting gold, is to hide the enormous bloated wealth, the swollen ill-gotten gains that the landlord, feudal and semi-feudal, have sucked from the peasantry in the last 26 years. All data show that the crores of rupees given as credit and other inputs, have gone largely to the landlord class—where a good part has been used for usury or speculation, i.e, most of it has gone to continue the old exploitation. Rich peasants use the credit, etc, to increase production. Landlords, with land monopoly, use it to evict the peasant.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, there is more feudal exploitation, not less. The landlord now does not lease land, but hires labour on low wages and lends at usurious rates. That the debt burden has increased and not decreased, over the last quarter century, is unquestionable, but the important point to note is that *usury would not be possible if land were given to the tiller*. If this fact is not seen, then everything in Indian agriculture is missed. In other words, the Congress land reforms only created and extended a new type of landlordism which combines in itself both the features of capitalism as well as feudalism. The former feudal landlords sold some of their lands and invested this money, together with the compensation they received, in industry. Several among them set up so-called farms under personal

cultivation through hiring wage labour, and to this extent were converted into capitalist landlords. Simultaneously, they continued tenant exploitation in different forms, depending upon various conditions prevailing in different areas and states. Thus they combine in themselves features of both capitalism and feudalism, and hence the mode of production can be categorised as semi-feudal, i.e., the imposition or penetration of the capitalist mode of production on a feudal mode. Thereby the feudal forms of exploitation do not cease, and to suggest, as Naqvi has done, that by "growing investment in land made by urban financiers, traders, and in trade and industrial capital by former landlords and the new rural rich" feudalism is being eliminated, is both wrong and misleading.

As the experience of the last one year has only reiterated, it is precisely this land monopoly which stands as a severe limit to the development of capitalism in agriculture. Thus, the whole experience of the last 26 years has confirmed the postulate that the bourgeoisie is incapable of ending this land monopoly, despite the fact that the class interests of the bourgeoisie would dictate the complete elimination of feudal and semi-feudal fetters on capitalist development.

In fact, therefore, in terms of the criteria for determining the class character of the state—which classes own and control the means of production and thereby control state power; in whose interest and to whose benefit is that power exercised—it must be concluded that not only the bourgeoisie but also the landlord class, comprising both feudal and capitalist landlords, share in that power, under the hegemony of the big bourgeoisie.

Instead of seeing here the operation of a law determining the emergence of new production relations within and dominated by the old, in place of investigating its forms of manifestation, Naqvi, to substantiate his thesis, at one point assumes the whole of agriculture to be "out of the bourgeois relationship fold" "at this level of abstraction" (wrong of Indian reality at any 'level of abstraction'), then abruptly switches over to the exact opposite of an assumption of the essential oneness/unity of the improved productive forces and "agrarian assets and output", with the "orbit of capitalist relations of production". The same methodological confusion between a law, which can have different manifestations and forms of manifestation, and a set of empirical data (which is only one manifestation) leads him to see the *regional* variations in the agrarian sector (yet talking of the system *as a whole*) as *qualitatively* distinct realities determining a *different* behaviour of the classes in different *areas*. Thus: there are "probably still large regions" where feudal and semi-feudal relations in one form or another still persist, where the feudal and semi-feudal elements constitute the social base of the state; where the bourgeoisie and their state have to compromise with this class, make substantial concessions to them, protect and defend their interests, and where "to this extent" the feudal and semi-feudal elements have a share in state power.

But since these 'bases' are seen as only 'local' or 'regional', such sharing of state power, limited to these regions, is for Naqvi, peripheral to the question of the central exercise of state power. Thus, the bourgeoisie does not share state power with the feudals and semi-feudals; the bourgeoisie partly shares power in parts of the state; therefore the state is a bourgeois state. Such is Naqvi's logic!

The final *coup de grace* for disposing of this (bothersome?) question is administered by a methodological sleight of hand which assumes the very process to be investigated, by asserting that even if such sharing of power between the bourgeoisie and feudal and semi-feudal elements were possible, by its nature it could only be—"is bound inevitably to be"—shortlived, temporary and uneasy, "*once capitalist relations have begun to grow in agriculture and assume increasing control of agrarian production assets*" (emphasis added). But the point at issue is precisely under what conditions, in what forms and to what extent have capitalist relations begun to grow in Indian agriculture! Then on the basis of this assertion, he postulates three alternative paths which cannot but lead to the desired conclusion, but which on examination, turn out to be historically outmoded and irrelevant, or untenable either in theory or actual concrete experience;

1) The first of these—of a bourgeois-led, anti-feudal alliance to eliminate feudal influence over state power—refers to a historical epoch long since over.

2) The second—overthrowing of the capitalists by feudal elements, in alliance with imperialism—is equally unreal today. In the present epoch, the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolution, and after the socialist revolution, no feudal element can 'fight' capitalism—any more than the capitalist class will fight to eliminate feudal interests. Faced with a common adversary, the new political force of the proletariat, the two classes will tend to alliance. Experience in India during British rule and after has already shown that this historical process is irreversible.

3) In the third alternative also there are serious flaws: i) *Suzerainty* is a non-class concept, used to describe a constitutional status, inadequate to describe class relations and wholly peripheral to the main issue of an *alliance* not forced but accepted by both the bourgeois and feudal interests, because the former was neither ready nor able to abolish feudalism; ii) focussing on "certain minor concessions" skirts the real issue of ownership in the means of production. Moreover, individuals may be tempted with minor concessions, but the latter can never tempt the *class* to give up its ownership of land; iii) forcing investment in industry, commerce and services of "part of these funds" and in capitalist farming on "part of their holdings".

Assuming that it is this third variant which operates in India, Naqvi maintains that since the feudal elements are "subservient"—under the 'suzerainty'?—to the bourgeoisie, *ipso facto*, the former do not share state power. Simultaneously he maintains that the feudal and semi-

feudal interests *retain and add to their property*—in which case the old property relations must still obtain.

We would then ask—is investing “part of their funds and revenues in commercial, industrial or servicing enterprises or in cultivation of land through wage labour at least on part of their holdings” to be equated with elimination of feudal interests? If this is not so, if they strike a deal with the bourgeoisie as ‘feudals’ to ‘accept suzerainty’, if in “probably still large regions” feudal and semi-feudal relations still persist and the bourgeoisie is forced to make concessions, protect and defend them, is not the landlord class in effect sharing in state power; forcing policies which protect its forms of exploitation, and make it the beneficiary of such policies? How then can it be maintained that the state is *solely* a state of the bourgeoisie, whose measures subserve the interest of *only* the bourgeois class?

And secondly, by confusing *appearance* with *essence* Naqvi uses subservience as the crucial determining factor in deciding the question of sharing state power. The junior - partner status of the landlord class cannot be used to negate the fact of alliance between the bourgeois and landlord classes, based on their ownership of the major part of the means of production in the two main sectors of the economy. *The outward domination—subservience form only conceals the inner relationship of actual alliance.* Instead of investigating and identifying this, Naqvi uses subservience to deny the alliance.

### *Strategy for the Revolution*

Methodological jumble must inevitably lead to confusion in defining strategy for the revolution. And this is what has happened to Naqvi.

Firstly, till the point of revolution, the state is a bourgeois state. When the revolution develops, the middle and small bourgeoisie disappear from the state, which is then reduced to a state of the big bourgeoisie. Similarly, till the point of revolution, the feudal and semi-feudal interests are subservient, economically and politically insignificant at the centre of state power, but at the point of change, the big bourgeoisie seek “a class alliance” with them and imperialism—the latter altogether ignored till now—giving them a share in state power.

That is to say; *the state then becomes a state of the big bourgeoisie, landlords and imperialism.*

If the big bourgeoisie was not the dominant section before, how does it now become the only section in control of state power? If feudal and semi-feudal elements were so unimportant in the economy and politics of the state, why should the big bourgeoisie offer them a share in power at the time of revolution?

Secondly, on the class alliances and the stage of revolution. In enumerating the class alliance for the revolution—industrial workers, landless peasants, poor peasants, lower middle peasants, tenants(?) and share croppers(?) (the latter two anyway do not constitute separate categories),

Naqvi presupposes the stage of socialist revolution. Whereas, when enumerating the enemies of the revolution—the monopoly and big bourgeoisie and the feudal and semi-feudal classes—he presupposes the stage of People's Democratic revolution. He also maintains that the middle and small bourgeoisie and the small and medium kulaks may get neutralised. What happens to the big kulak, who surprisingly is found neither in the camp of revolution or counter-revolution?

Naqvi's position may then be briefly summarised as follows: up to this point state power was wielded by the bourgeois class, state policies subserved "the interests of the bourgeoisie as a class, and capitalism as a system of economic and political power". "The enterprising rich and upper middle farmers. . . never had it so good"; "all in all, it is the bourgeoisie as a class, including the kulak normally considered part of the national bourgeoisie, which has gained most from the agrarian policies hitherto pursued by the Indian Government". If this analysis is correct, if there is no long-term conflict between the big bourgeoisie and the middle and small strata, then the main blow of the revolution must be against the entire bourgeoisie, including its rural counterpart and the question of neutralising the national bourgeoisie does not arise. Where then does the question of the People's Democratic stage of the revolution come in; why should the middle and small bourgeoisie and kulaks begin to "even support the struggle" directed against the state in which they exercise state power? The fundamental aim of the People's Democratic stage is the overthrow and abolition of feudal and semi-feudal interests and precedes the stage where the struggle is against a state "all bourgeois" in character.

These are questions to which Naqvi's analysis can give no answers—and with good reason. Strategy and analysis stand in contradiction. Methodological inconsistency also has its own logic.

<sup>1</sup> It is curious to note Naqvi's assertion at this point in his argument, of the factual error that "the left parties", all along characterising the economic policies of the Indian Government as representing the capitalist path of economic development, "have . . . been demanding the pursuit of a non-capitalist path". While it is not clear what is the explicit link with the preceding argument, the fact remains that only one left party—the CPI—has made such a demand.

<sup>2</sup> Though it should be pointed out that only a few from among the earlier complex substrata of tenants, in fact, made good.

<sup>3</sup> The most marked change in structure in the last 10 years has been the decrease in the number of tenants and increase in landless labour, rather than the increase in size of holdings and number of rich peasants.

## BOOK REVIEW

### Review Article

### *Six Mis-leading Economists*

V K R V RAO *et al*, INFLATION AND INDIA'S ECONOMIC CRISIS, Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, Delhi 1973, pp70, Rs 10.

SIX economists, from the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi, have come out with certain remedies to deal with inflation and the current economic crisis in India. In doing so they have betrayed profound contradictions between what they profess and what they prescribe and have shown considerable ambivalence in their approach to certain strategic policies. In fact, they have disguised their proposed strategic changes in the garb of tactical adjustments.

They claim to be "firm believers" in the ideals of "democracy and socialism". But, the short-term measures they have suggested amount to a strategic retreat even from the limited advance towards monopoly control and nationalisation of wholesale trade in foodgrains and a betrayal of the larger interests of the masses of workers in industry and agriculture. On the one hand, they have affirmed their commitment to monopoly/oligopoly control and elimination of economic concentration. On the other, they have suggested a whole lot of measures including liberalisation of licencing of oligopolistic firms in the name of "short-term" measures meant to boost production.

#### *Liberalisation of Monopoly Control*

The ambivalence of the six economists is clearly highlighted in their attitude towards monopolistic and oligopolistic firms engaged in the production of essential commodities. Apparently they accept industrial policy as an important instrument for ensuring social justice. At the same time they plead for a modification of the present policy in favour of oligopolistic firms. Firstly, by virtue of a narrow text-book definition

that a monopolist is one who is the sole producer of any product, they have attempted to liberate most of the big monopoly houses from clutches of licencing authorities and Monopolies Commission. And secondly, they have advanced a vigorous plea for the relaxation of control over the whole range of monopolists and oligopolists under the pretext of increasing production to meet the current shortages and inflationary pressures,

They have proclaimed that their measures are "only temporary to meet a temporary situation"! But what they have really suggested are basic concessions which will have far-reaching and long-term repercussions. They recognise that there is considerable excess capacity in these oligopolistic industries partly on account of their tendency to maximise their gains by keeping production below capacity and partly due to shortages in basic investment goods such as steel and cement as well as power besides shortages of important raw materials like cotton, oilseeds, sugar-cane, etc. Nevertheless, they are inclined to attribute the current shortages to faulty industrial policy and its application. They feel that the lack of response of the corporate sector to the recent liberalisation of licencing measures aimed at the expansion and creation of capacity, is attributable to some "genuine question about industrial climate of which industrial policy is one of the main determinants". This is rather a strange diagnosis. If excess capacity is due to shortages of investment goods and basic raw materials, the removal of these bottlenecks should have been the sheet-anchor of their policy prescription. Instead, they have used "industrial climate" as a launching pad for a series of concessions to monopoly/oligopoly firms. These concessions are in the nature of a strategic withdrawal which will have serious repercussions on the structure of industry over a long-period. For instance, by no stretch of imagination can licencing for new capacity be regarded as a short-term measure. Licences issued today will take a couple of years to mature into creation of additional capacity. Once capacity is created it cannot be liquidated—it should not be liquidated—even in the long run. The six economists cannot be oblivious of the long-term implications of liberalised licencing for expanded capacity. What they really mean, therefore, is to allow monopolistic and oligopolistic firms to grow over a long period in the name of dealing with current shortages in production.

One might ask why production cannot be increased by encouraging small and medium firms. But the six economists do not believe that the small and medium firms can deliver the goods. Here again their position is ambivalent though they could not conceal their bias. On the one hand they appear to support the "policy of diverting existing lines of production to small/medium firms as also of encouraging them to take to new lines of production over a long-period". But they deplore that "there is no escape" from this policy. Their prejudice against the small and medium firms is, perhaps, based on their poor performance in the current crisis. They have not cared to analyse whether the shortages in investment

goods and raw materials have also affected the smaller firms. Nor have they bothered to ask whether this failure is attributable to the impact of the general crisis which affects ancillary industries with greater severity. Instead, they maintain that the small and medium industries lack the technical and financial resources "to take over the needed additions to production from the dominant producers". If there was an 'escape' their logic would, perhaps, have led them to suggest that the real solution lies in handing over the entire industrial sector as well as the management of public sector—why the entire economy—to the big business houses in India in the name of efficiency and production! In any case their diagnosis has compelled them to emphasise the need for "a reorientation of public policy" towards monopoly/oligopoly with a view to expanding output. They are also inclined to licence "new large units" partly to reap economies of scale and partly to reduce "the power of monopolists and oligopolists" through "fresh competition". Marvellous economic logic; indeed! First of all, according to their line of thinking, if there is more than one producer he should not be called a monopolist. Secondly, the oligopolistic firms have excess capacity besides financial, entrepreneurial and technical skills. If they are allowed to expand through liberalised licencing, production would increase in the "short-run". Thirdly, if a few more large firms are licenced, there would also be "fresh competition". It is a pity that the six economists have conveniently forgotten their text book definition of competition, size of market, behaviour of a few large firms in a sellers' market and so on. One is taken aback by their implicit faith in the behaviour of oligopolists in a sellers' market when they suggest that "reducing oligopoly profits will be better secured by letting them expand their production and sell at lower prices". It is absurd to expect that in a sellers' market oligopolists would, on their own, sell at lower prices. Economists with a sense of realism would appreciate that it is easier to make leopards change their spots than to make oligopolists change their pricing habits in a sellers' market. But the six economists believe otherwise. The same kind of bias is betrayed by their suggestion that oligopolistic firms should be licenced to work "in backward regions where there are natural endowments favourable to production". It is like allowing tigers to enter a cattleshed. What a sense of realism and concern for backward areas! If the six economists are so keen about championing the interests of monopolists and oligopolists these could have been more straightforward. They need not have sugar-coated their preference for monopoly houses in the name of "production" or development of "backward regions", all as "temporary measures to meet a temporary situation"! Whom do they want to bluff? the government or their fellow economists?

### *Indifference to Landlordism*

Whereas the six economists regard a realignment of industrial policy (in terms of liberalised licencing and expanded capacities in favour

of oligopolistic firms), as of immediate importance vigorous implementation of a radical land reform or an immediate crackdown on the black-marketeers and hoarders are not regarded as anything important in dealing with the current inflationary situation. Instead, they have taken shelter under "the laws of supply and demand and their relevant elasticities" as if they operate independently of the ownership structure and relations of production.

The six economists recognise that the basic problem in agriculture is "the failure of output to expand sufficiently to meet the secular increase in money demand due to deficit financing and accompanying rise in money incomes". Therefore, they are quite right in their understanding that "the basic answer to the problem lies in a substantial increase in production". They should also be credited with recognition of the fact that small farmers make a more intensive use of land and irrigation water than large farmers. But they do not address themselves to the basic question of how to liquidate landlordism and semi-feudal relations which dampen the productive energies of the masses of actual cultivators. There is no concern shown against the growing dominance of landlords despite the sham land reforms; there is no mention of the deteriorating conditions of the tenants; and, the increasing size of the landless rural proletariat and the growing pauperisation of the small farmers have not disturbed them. Instead, they have satisfied their conscience by singing their praise of the small farmer oriented agriculture. All that they have mentioned is that "in addition to the existing measures for the redistribution of land, provision of long-term credit to the small farmers on liberal terms for the purchase of land and the provision of irrigation would be necessary to reduce their dependence on the market as well as for marking a more effective utilisation of resources". As if the "existing measures for the redistribution of land" are adequate to solve the basic questions of land relations. A ritualistic reference that "land reforms would also contribute to the more intensive utilisation of the hitherto underutilised resources", amounts to bypassing the basic issue in agricultural production. Maybe they think that land reform is a long-term problem and the lack of incentives to produce on the part of the tillers of the soil who groan under the dead weight of landlordism and semi-feudal relations in agriculture, is not their "immediate" concern. Naturally, therefore, they have restricted themselves to the familiar refrain of more water, credit, fertilizer, seed and so on as the "short-term" solution to the problem of agricultural production. Despite these measures, the six economists have betrayed considerable discomfort and pessimism about agricultural production which they regard as "essentially a long-term solution".

### *Retreat from Nationalisation of Wholesale Trade*

This pessimism is more obvious in the case of food production. That is why they have turned their attention to the public distribution

system which they think is "necessary for ensuring an assured supply of basic food articles at reasonable prices to the economically vulnerable or weaker sections of population". At the same time they maintain that the takeover of wholesale trade is not necessary to "provide foodgrains through the public distribution system". On this basis, they argue that "if the objective is to provide only for the vulnerable sections of the population dependent upon the market, then nationalisation of wholesale trade is not necessary". One wonders how the six economists could ignore the social objectives (however weak and half-hearted they may be) behind the takeover of wholesale trade in foodgrains (in wheat). In any case, their understanding of the objectives behind the nationalisation of the wholesale trade in foodgrains does not tally with the proclaimed objectives of the government. One of the important proclaimed objectives behind the nationalisation of the wholesale trade was to break the stranglehold of a powerful group of intermediaries who exploit both the producers and the consumers. It is true that such a measure should have embraced all the important foodgrains and raw materials. If the government has failed to protect the vulnerable sections of the population, it is only because they have been unwilling or unable to crackdown on the land lords and speculative hoarders who monopolise the bulk of the marketable/marketed surplus. Moreover, it is not necessary that nationalisation of wholesale trade should be accompanied by public distribution of foodgrains to the whole population as assumed by the six economists. A dual price system or a dual distribution system (one for the vulnerable sections through the public distribution system and another for the affluent sections through public or private retail channels) can be consistent with nationalisation of wholesale trade. If a comprehensive nationalisation of wholesale trade of foodgrains were accompanied by compulsory levy on the entire marketable surplus from the landlords and millers and monopoly procurement by governmental agencies like Food Trading Corporation at equitable relative prices between commodities and differential procurement prices between different classes of producers on the one hand, and a well organised net-work of public distribution system on the other, it would have been possible to achieve simultaneously the objectives of breaking the backbone of the monopoly power of the wholesalers and landlords and protecting the vital interests of the vulnerable sections amongst the consumers. Instead, the six economists have used the interest of the vulnerable sections of the population as a pretext for beating a strategic retreat from nationalisation of wholesale trade. It is indeed ingenious on their part to negate one social purpose (i.e, breaking the monopoly powers of wholesalers) in the name of another (i.e, protecting the interest of the vulnerable sections of the population. In this, the six economists have also used the lack of social, political and administrative preparedness as the basis for projecting their policy of retreat from nationalisation of wholesale trade in foodgrains. Apparently, this prescription is in contradiction with their initial stance that they are not

opposed to nationalisation of the wholesale trade provided it is comprehensive.

### *Mock Fight against Blackmarketeers*

The six economists acknowledge deficit financing as the major factor accounting for the current inflation. As they put it, "the real and the most conspicuous single factor behind the increase in the money stock is the borrowings of the Central Government from the Reserve Bank or deficit financing by the Government of India". They also entertain a legitimate fear that the current inflationary trends would jeopardise the very "task of socialist transformation" and result in "dilution of the accepted national objectives of economic growth, social justice and self-reliance, besides causing great distress among consumers and unrest among wage earners and other fixed income groups". Of course, for them socialist transformation does not involve any fundamental change in the ownership of the means of production, exchange and distribution or in the relations of production. They do not mention anything about ownership of property and property relations which are the distinguishing features of any economic system. Instead, they define socialist transformation as "a fundamental change in the pattern of life and behaviour on the part of the community especially on the part of the elite and the well-off in all sectors of society". Instead, they indulge in empty phraseology when they suggest that we must make "careful preparation—institutional, political, economic, social and psychological—for ushering in socialist change of the kind that will last and grow stronger". With such nebulous play with words they are able to assert that under current conditions economic policy "must give priority to increasing production if we are to find a socialist answer to our problem of poverty". They do not seem to realise that the socialist answer to eradicating poverty does not lie primarily in increasing production, but elsewhere. Obviously, for the kind of socialism which the six economists have in mind, it is immaterial who owns the means of production, distribution and exchange. But they would not say so in so many words. Instead, they have chosen to confuse the socialist consciousness of their readers with familiar Marxist distinction between strategy and tactics and make it appear that their measures for the control of inflation are in the nature of tactical adjustments within the broad strategy for socialism. Unfortunately, as shown earlier, every major policy recommendation they have made amounts to a strategic retreat in favour of big business houses. This is also evident from the fiscal measures they have suggested for controlling inflation.

Apparently, these six economists are not so much against inflationary deficit financing as such. In fact, they seem to approve the concept of "safe deficit financing". In their view, deficit financing undertaken "earlier" was within safe limits. This implies that only "current inflation" has violated the safe limits of deficit financing. Perhaps, this is

because earlier inflationary tendencies did not lead to so much of "unrest among the people and threatening to bring the working of economic machinery to a halt". In other words, the continuous erosion of real incomes of the masses of poor and middle classes over the last two decades or so is not what they are bothered about. All that they are concerned with is that the current inflation has crossed the tolerance limits. Accordingly, they have chastised the RBI for abdicating its responsibility for maintaining price stability by permitting a large volume of loans to the Central Government and adding to the monetary stock for this purpose. They have also blamed the Finance Ministry for creating economic instability by indulging in large volumes of deficit financing.

It is true that they are quite candid in their admission that "development . . . leads to a rise in the price of consumption goods and therefore in the general level of prices". They even argue that "a certain minimal rise in the price level is thus inevitable in any process of deliberately forcing the pace of development". To them, such a rise in price is not inflationary. It is obvious that the stand taken by the six economists is nothing but the familiar Keynesian prescription of a facile boom to brighten the investment climate for the private entrepreneurs. Naturally, their policy prescription smacks of a strategic attack on even the limited advances made under state capitalism in India.

The fiscal and monetary policies meant "to bring about a sharp and immediate reduction in the aggregate money demand" is typically Keynesian. Substantial increase in market borrowings and in non-operable cash balances, reduction in public expenditure, increase in government receipts from taxation, public borrowing and augmented profits of public enterprises with a consequent reduction in private expenditure component of aggregate expenditure, are all drawn from the Keynesian remedies. It is not that these remedies are intrinsically bad because they are Keynesian. In fact, their understanding of certain features of fiscal policy is not altogether incorrect. Firstly, they attribute inflationary deficit financing to inadequate tax effort in relation to the expanding developmental and non-developmental outlays of the government and shrinking tax base on account of large black earnings. Secondly, they recognise that "much of the increased taxation is on commodities. . . and a good share of the commodity taxation is on intermediate and producer goods with a resulting multiplier effect in its incidence. All this has added to the rise in industrial prices and increased the cost of living. The attempts at increasing government receipts by additional taxation have thus proved to be of an inflationary rather than an anti-inflationary character". Arising from this, they have also recommended "a sharp reduction in the excise duties on mass consumption items accompanied by a compensating increase in the duties on luxury and semi-luxury items and some specific taxation of monopoly and rentier profits". They have also drawn the attention of the government "to the scope that exists for additional receipts from taxation by imposing anti-inflationary surcharge

on additions to income accruing to non-fixed income groups and individuals, a sharp rise in the tax on sales of property, including land, house property, private sites, gold, jewellery and durable consumption goods used by the higher income groups and a surtax on urban property in excess of a defined limit". These measures are meant to form a part of a supplementary budget to be introduced during the current financial year. They have also favoured an upward revision in interest rate on government loans and an augmentation of profits from public enterprises through appropriate pricing, costing and management policies. Raising the rate of interest on bank deposits, bringing a large volume of deposits and advances which are outside the banking system "within the banking frame of control and regulation" and closing "the loopholes that now exist for diversion of funds to speculation and stockpiling" while at the same time, "increase the flow of funds from consumption to savings" are some of the changes in the monetary policy suggested by the six economists. Besides, as mentioned earlier, they have suggested an "immediate reduction in public expenditure on both plan and non-plan items". However, they are in two minds about pruning of public expenditure. On the one hand, they refer to the "substantial possibilities for reduction in government expenditure for both plan and non-plan items" by removing the "frills, display, ostentation, prestige and other forms of conspicuous consumption". On the other, they feel that "current expenditure is bound to keep on increasing partly because of the needs of development, partly because of expenditure on national calamities like floods, drought, etc and partly for compensating the rise in costs of living of government employees resulting from rising prices". Hence their pessimism about reduction in public expenditure. One would have expected them to identify areas of non-developmental expenditure which could be chopped off in large chunks; nor have they shown any particular concern for the adverse consequences of slashing down of plan expenditure on growth and employment. Here, their concern for stability seems to outrun that for production. It is not quite clear whether and how resource mobilisation implied in the various changes in the tax structure, envisaged by the six economists, will be adequate. At the same time, one wonders how and why the enormous resources left untapped have escaped the attention of the six economists. As is well known, income tax that is evaded is more than what is collected. The same holds good for excise and sales taxes. Foreign exchange leakage is officially estimated to be about Rs 250 crores per annum. The stock of black money hoards could be anything between Rs 10,000 to 15,000 crores. If 20 per cent of this could be tapped at least Rs 2000 crores could be mobilised. The value of the assets relating to electricity and water amounts to more than Rs 5000 crores. At present more than Rs 100 crores are lost every year through the operation of these facilities. If the loss could be converted into 10 per cent return on capital, an additional Rs 600 crores per annum would be forthcoming. Similarly, nearly Rs 6000 crores of capital is sunk in public enterprises.

At present the profits earned are only around Rs 100 crores. If they are made to yield a 10 per cent return on capital employed the surpluses earned from them will at least be Rs 600 crores per annum. At the modest reckoning of the Raj Committee, agriculture could be made to yield at least Rs 150 crores more through the Agricultural Holdings Tax. If, despite all this potential, Indian economic development is constrained by inadequate resource mobilisation it is because of the inherent contradictions of the mixed economy in operation and the corrupt political superstructure it breeds and sustains. The mixture we have, leaves all the lucrative centres of profits in the hands of a small minority of landlords and big business which has to be allured through higher and higher profits; has to be induced through fiscal incentives and supported through highly subsidised infrastructural services and other inputs. Even luxury consumption and imports are regarded as incentive goods. It is this system which corrupts and incapacitates the political and administrative superstructure and renders it incapable of mobilising resources and using them efficiently. Unfortunately, the six economists have shown an indifference to these basic problems of political economy and have satisfied their conscience by a bland statement that "no amount of logic or social concern can bring results unless a vigorous attempt is made to eliminate corruption and nepotism at various levels and the most stringent action taken against violators of price control measures, blackmarketeers and tax evaders". They feel that the government has ample legal and other instruments at its disposal for dealing with those who are constantly breaking the economic laws and setting at naught its attempts at restoring health to the economy. But they have failed to do so because India is a "soft state". A good scapegoat indeed !

Instead of suggesting measures to grapple with blackmoney the six economists have launched an attack on price controls as the real culprit behind the blackmarket. They argue that "the economic laws that govern micro-prices are essentially the laws of supply and demand and their relevant elasticities; and these need to be taken into account when we resort to price control both in respect of the commodities to be selected for control and the levels at which we want to fix their prices below their free market price". Stretched to its logical ends, this line of approach would lead to a complete decontrol of all commodities. Because, all price controls are meant to suppress inflation. However, the six economists have restricted their prescription to decontrol of cars and scooters, cement, steel, stainless steel, etc which are largely in the nature of luxury consumption. At the same time, they seem to favour a narrowing down of the gap between market and controlled price even with regard to essential commodities :

- (a) By enhancing the retention price allowed to the producer, who will then go on to produce more, provided inputs are available ;
- (b) By enhancing the indirect taxation which accrues to the government and then can be ploughed back into investment activity in the

public sector.

Briefly the above suggestion has the following implications. Firstly, in so far as the gap between the free market price and controlled price of essential goods will be large, there would be an upward revision of the controlled prices of essential commodities. Secondly, the increased retention price would result in higher profits to the producers. Thirdly, there would be an enhancement of indirect taxes on essential commodities. It is important to note that the last one is in contradiction to their earlier suggestion that indirect taxes on commodities of common consumption should be reduced.

As noted earlier the six economists attribute the "emergence of buoyant blackmarket in commodities" to "the failure of the government to take into account economic logic". Besides, they seem to agree with the Wanchoo Committee that tax evasion is due to "high marginal tax rates". Consequently, the six economists have favoured a drastic reduction of price controls and, implicitly, a scaling down of the marginal rates of taxation, as the effective means of disciplining the blackmarketeer and for wooing the blackmoney.

Thus, the substantive aspects of the approach of the six economists amount to an indifference to landlordism in the rural areas; encouragement of oligopolistic firms through liberalised licencing and control; attack on wholesale trade and price control; additional incentives to producers and so on—all in the name of temporary remedies defending democracy and socialism. All that we can say is that leading economists should lead and never mis-lead.

M J K THAVARAJ

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SUHAS CHATTOPADHYAY

*On the Class Nature of Land Reforms in  
India since Independence*

TOWARDS the end of the 1960s there was a widespread opinion at the governmental levels and in some academic circles that a considerable progress in land reforms had gradually and almost imperceptibly transformed the semi-feudal agrarian structure of pre-independence India into a largely peasant economy.<sup>1</sup> The claims for the progress in land reforms were as follows:

(i) zamindaris, jagirs, inams and other intermediary tenures had been practically abolished, bringing 20 million tenants into direct relationship with the state and making available to the state governments several million acres of cultivable land for redistribution to landless agriculturists;<sup>2</sup>

(ii) complete security of tenure had been ensured in Uttar Pradesh (where the landlords could not resume any land), and in the Union territory of Delhi, in West Bengal in respect of under-raiyats (other than bargadars) and in Rajasthan in respect of a minimum holding, having a net annual income of Rs. 1200;<sup>3</sup>

(iii) in Gujarat, Kerala, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mysore, Orissa, Himachal Pradesh and Tripura, security of tenure was subject to the landlord's right to resume land for personal cultivation in specified cases. The period within which such resumption could be exercised had, however, expired in most cases. In some states

resumption of land by landlords had been restricted;<sup>4</sup>

(iv) about 3 million tenants and share-croppers had acquired ownership of more than 7 million acres of land;<sup>5</sup> and,

(v) laws imposing ceiling on agricultural holdings were enacted in almost all the states between 1958 and 1962 and over 2.3 million acres of land had been declared surplus in excess of the ceiling limits. The state governments took possession of about 1.6 million acres of surplus land. Tenants, uneconomic holders and landless agriculturists were being settled on these lands.<sup>6</sup>

Attempts were also made to make us believe that some of the more patent blemishes of agrarian relations had been removed,<sup>7</sup> and that the agrarian structure had become more rational and equitable<sup>8</sup>. It is true that land reform measures like abolition of intermediaries and tenancy reforms shed away some of the feudal characteristics of the agrarian relations in India, and thereby some better-off sections of the peasantry had been relieved of their feudal burdens. A definite change took place in the rural property structure. Some of the landlords having loose connection with their land had been removed from the property structure, while some of the erstwhile absentee landlords came back to the village. Acquisition of proprietary rights by the tenants in their land encouraged them to take to agriculture much more seriously than when the land was in the hands of intermediaries. In fact in the last two decades a major change was that agricultural land passed more and more to the hands of those who took a more active interest in agriculture. Thus one of the main recommendations of the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee that land must belong to the tiller had been 'implemented' in the sense that only those persons who had been tilling the lands of others as tenants and not those who had been cultivating the lands of their employers as wage workers were considered to be tillers.<sup>9</sup>

This, however, does not necessarily mean that the agrarian structure has really become more rational and equitable. The benefits of the laws for security of tenure could not be fully reaped by a large body of tenants, mainly because of the right of resumption for personal cultivation granted to the landlords in many of the states. The landlords who came back to the villages often leased out part of the land they owned, under various forms of open and disguised tenancy, taking extreme care to forestall any kind of permanent rights to the tenants. Many informal share-cropping arrangements had been in existence in different parts of the country. There had been forcible evictions of tenants through devices such as voluntary surrenders. Statutory rent or the share of the crop payable by the tenant to the landlord was still high in some areas. All these were not the features of a rational agrarian structure. The claim that the Indian agrarian structure had become more equitable, would only mean closing one's eyes to the ugly reality that the avowed objective of reducing inequalities in landholding had been dealt with in a cavalier fashion as a result of which the excessive concentration of landownership remained,

at the end of 1960s, more or less at the same levels as before the land reforms. Unfortunately, a proper estimate of the latest situation in respect of concentration of ownership of land cannot be made due to lack of up-to-date information.

The latest published data on the distribution of landholdings come from the Seventeenth Round of the National Sample Survey (NSS). These relate to both the household ownership holdings and the agricultural holdings. If tenancy is sought to be abolished by transfer of ownership to the cultivating tenant, the ownership of holdings is redistributed and in due course all tenants come to own the land under their cultivation. Therefore, the pattern of ownership of agricultural holdings becomes relevant for an objective assessment of the situation.

The Seventeenth Round data on the distribution of agricultural holdings relate to the year 1960-61. These may be compared with the Eighth Round data relating to the year 1953-54. Table I depicts the all-India distributions of estimated numbers of agricultural holdings and area operated as under the control of Very Small Holders, Small Holders, Middle Holders, and Big Holders.<sup>10</sup> The Very Small Holders may be considered as very poor, Small Holders as poor, Middle Holders as semi-rich and Big Holders as rich. This classification is an arbitrary one because mere size-classes of agricultural holdings are not enough to determine the economic status of the agricultural landholders. In fact this classification cannot be accurately made without adequate information regarding fertility of land, productivity, application of capital, extent of hired labour and so forth. Since this classification does not take into account the regional variations, the jotdars and landlords cannot be treated as a separate class and therefore they are included in the Big Holders class. For the sake of convenience holdings under the control of Big Holders have been subdivided into size-classes (1) 15.00—24.99 acres, (2) 25.00—49.99 acres and (3) 50 acres and above. It is most likely that the holdings of the last two size-classes were under the control of the jotdars and landlords in various parts of the country.

Table I shows that there had been only marginal changes in the distributions of agricultural holdings and area operated between 1953-54 and 1960-61. For example 19.72 per cent of the holdings under the Very Small Holders in 1953-54 accounted for only 1.07 per cent of the total area operated. In 1960-61 the Very Small Holders held 17.13 per cent of the total holdings and 1.27 per cent of the total area. The Small Holders held, in 1953-54, 40.28 per cent of the total holdings claiming 14.37 per cent of the total area operated and in 1960-61, 44.56 per cent of the holdings which accounted for 17.92 per cent of the total area. The Middle Holders held 27.48 per cent of the total holdings claiming 31.15 per cent of the total area operated in 1953-54 and 27.75 per cent of the total holdings and 34.89 per cent of the area operated in 1960-61. Again, 12.52 per cent of the holdings belonging to the Big Holders in 1953-54 claimed 53.41 per cent of the total area operated. The share of the Big Holders in 1960-61 declined

TABLE I  
DISTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS, 1953-54 and 1960-61

Size Class of Holdings (acres)	8th Round NSS : 1953-54				17th Round NSS : 1960-61			
	Number of Holdings (000)	Area Operated (000 acres)	Percentage of Total Holdings	Percentage of Area Operated	Number of Holdings (000)	Area Operated (000 acres)	Percentage of Total Holdings	Percentage of Area Operated
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Very Small Holders : upto 0.99	8744	3576	19.72	1.07	8696	4199	17.13	1.27
Small Holders : 1.00—4.99	17866	48000	40.28	14.37	22624	59049	44.56	17.92
Middle Holders : 5.00—14.99	12189	104029	27.48	31.15	14088	115014	27.75	34.89
Big Holders : 15.00—24.99	5555	178388	12.52	53.41	5357	151323	10.56	45.92
25.00—49.99	2949	56068	6.65	16.79	3064	55916	6.04	16.97
50.00 & Above	1922	65501	4.33	19.61	1772	57178	3.49	17.35
	684	56819	1.54	17.01	521	38229	1.03	11.60
All Sizes	44354	333993	100.00	100.00	50765	329585	100.00	100.00

to some extent both in terms of holdings and the area held. They had 10.36 per cent of the holdings and 45.92 per cent of the total area operated.

The area claimed by 1.54 per cent holdings belonging to the uppermost class of the Big Holders (size-class 50 acres and above) was as much as 17.01 per cent of the total area in 1953-54, while the corresponding percentages for 1960-61 period were 1.03 per cent holdings and 11.60 per cent in area. Again the area claimed by 5.87 per cent holdings belonging to the top two classes together (size-classes 25.00-49.99 and 50.00 and above) was 36.62 per cent area in 1953-54, while the corresponding percentages for 1960-61 were 4.52 per cent holdings and 28.95 per cent area.

This apparent decline in the proportion of holdings and area held by the top two classes of the Big Holders between the two periods calls for some probing. It appears as though redistribution of agricultural holdings has taken place in favour of the Middle and Small Holders between 1953 and 1961. The increase in the number of holdings and area operated under the control of these two classes in 1960-61, however, does not seem to have taken place as a direct consequence of imposition of land ceilings because in most states the ceiling laws came into force after 1960-61. The redistribution of agricultural holdings in favour of the Middle and Small Holders seems to be the result of partition of holdings due to inheritance and transfer by the big landholders to the other members of their families. The big landowners might have transferred their surplus lands in excess of the ceiling limits to be imposed by the anticipated ceiling laws. In such cases the transferred lands would have actually continued to belong to the same big landholders.

In spite of the claim that the agrarian structure is more equitable today, the concentration ratios of agricultural holdings in 1953-54 and 1960-61 (Table II) show that the excessive concentration of agricultural holdings in the hands of big landholders had remained more or less the same between the two periods. The all-India concentration ratio of agricultural holdings which was 0.6220 in 1953-54, changed to 0.5836 in 1960-61. The population zones also showed excessive concentration in the two periods. The ratio for South India was slightly higher in 1960-61 compared to 1953-54. In the other population zones the concentration ratios showed negligible decline in 1960-61.

TABLE II  
CONCENTRATION RATIO OF AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS

Population Zones	1953-54	1960-61
(1)	(2)	(3)
1 North India	0.5226	0.5075
2 East India	0.5608	0.5174
3 South India	0.6266	0.6659
4 West India	0.5615	0.5486
5 Central India	0.5731	0.5198
6 North West India	0.5742	0.5584
All-India	0.6220	0.5836

Due to reorganisation of states, the population zones for 1953-54 are not strictly comparable to the population zones for 1960-61. Table II gives us only a rough idea of the concentration of agricultural holdings in the different population zones in the two periods. The names of the different states constituting the population zones are given below:

Population Zones	States	
	1953-54	1960-61
(1)	(2)	(3)
North India	Uttar Pradesh	Uttar Pradesh
East India	Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Assam, Manipur, Tripura	Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Assam
South India	Travancore-Cochin, Coorg, Andhra, Madras, Mysore	Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Madras, Mysore
West India	Bombay, Saurashtra, Kutch	Gujarat, Maharashtra
Central India	Madhya Pradesh, Madhya Bharat	Madhya Pradesh
	Hyderabad, Bhopal, Vindhya Pradesh	
North West India	Rajasthan, Punjab, PEPSU, Jammu & Kashmir, Ajmer, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh	Rajasthan, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir

TABLE III  
AREA DECLARED SURPLUS OR TAKEN POSSESSION OF  
BY STATE GOVERNMENTS AND AREA DISTRIBUTED

State	Surplus Area	Area Distributed	(000 acres) Area Distributed as Percentage of Surplus Area
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Andhra Pradesh	0.2	—	—
Tamil Nadu	82.0	17.3	21.1
Madhya Pradesh	84.0	12.4	14.8
Uttar Pradesh	238.0	119.6	50.3
Maharashtra	271.0	114.7	42.3
Gujarat	50.0	13.8	27.6
Assam	34.0	0.5	1.5
Jammu & Kashmir	450.0	444.8	98.8
Punjab	368.5	—	—
West Bengal	776.6	179.9	23.2
Total	2354.3	903.0	38.4

Sources : (1) The figures in col (2) for Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat are obtained from V M Dandekar and Nilakanta Rath, "Poverty in India, Policies and Programmes," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol VI, No. 2, 1971, p 118.

(2) The figure in col (2) for Tamil Nadu is obtained from N Ram, "Real Face of DMK's Land Reforms Claims", *People's Democracy*, Vol. 7, No 28, 1971, p 5.

(3) The figures in col (2) for the other states are obtained from Planning Commission, *Implementation of Land Reforms*.

(4) The figures in col (3), are obtained from Suresh Chandra Mathur, "Land Reforms, Progress & Problems", *Tejana*, Vol XIII, No. 23, 1969, p 12.

During the years subsequent to 1960-61, as the official sources claim, over 2.3 million acres of land had been declared surplus in excess of the limits imposed by the ceiling laws. Of this surplus about 1.6 million acres of land had been taken possession of by the state governments. But less than 1.0 million acres of land had been distributed. Surplus lands in excess of ceiling limits that had been declared or taken possession of by the different state governments and area distributed during 1960s are shown in Table III.

To examine the impact of this redistribution we may assume that most of the 1.6 million acres of surplus land acquired by the state governments came from the land that had been under the control of the top two classes of the Big Holders in 1960-61, because the ceiling limits imposed by the laws were mainly applicable to these classes. We may also assume that the surplus land which had been redistributed had gone to the landless and very small landholders, and thereby the number of holdings and the area under the control of the Very Small Holders had been increased. Since it is not possible to estimate the number of holdings under the control of different categories of landholders, we will consider only the area controlled by them. Table IV presents the new distribution of area.

TABLE IV  
DISTRIBUTION OF AREA OPERATED (in million acres)

Size Class of Holdings (acres)	1960-61		After Redistribution of Land (1961-1970)	
	Area Operated	Area Operated	Area Operated	Percentage of Area Operated
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Very Small Holders: up to 0.99	4.2	1.27	5.1	1.55
Small and Middle Holders: 1.00-4.99 & 5.00-14.99	174.0	52.81	174.0	52.92
Big Holders: 15.00-24.99	55.9	16.97	55.9	17.00
Top Two Classes of Big Holders: 25.00-49.99 and 50.00 & Above	95.4	28.95	93.8	28.53
All Classes	329.5	100.00	328.8	100.00

It appears from Tables I and IV that the area claimed by the holdings belonging to the top two classes of the Big Holders was as much as 36.62 per cent of the total area in 1953-54, while the corresponding percentages for 1960-61 and the period after redistribution of land were 28.95 per cent and 28.53 per cent respectively. Again the area claimed by the holdings belonging to the Very Small Holders was only 1.07 per cent of the total area in 1953-54 and the corresponding percentages for 1960-61

and the period after redistribution of land were 1.27 per cent and 1.55 per cent respectively. It is quite clear that the redistribution of land after 1960-61 did not reduce the concentration of land to any considerable extent.

As it is very difficult to obtain reliable and up-to-date figures for surplus land declared, acquired and distributed by the state governments, what we have presented in Tables III and IV must be regarded as tentative.<sup>11</sup> We should also point out that our exercises to determine the extent of concentration of landholding after the redistribution of land in the 1960s are only illustrative.

A recent study points out that by the end of 1970 the 'declared surplus' of land for India as a whole "was only 2.4 million acres and area distributed just half of that, or 0.3 of one per cent of the total cultivated land of India"<sup>12</sup>. This study also points out that between the early 1960s and the end of 1970, "the states of Bihar, Mysore, Kerala and Orissa have not contributed a single acre of surplus land. In all of Andhra Pradesh only 1400 acres<sup>13</sup> have been taken over, and none distributed. The big state of Tamil Nadu contributed so little of declared and distributed surplus land that its performance is only marginally better than that of the non-contributors". The picture depicted by Table III has been corroborated by these findings.

It should be pointed out here that, in recent times, purchase of land in total disregard for ceilings has become an alarming feature of landholdings in some parts of the country. Due to the sharp increase in productivity of land and larger returns to management with the adoption of the new technology, larger farmers find in land purchase a very lucrative investment for their profits. Recently a research study has reported that the land owned by big farmers in the Punjab increased by about 9.5 per cent between 1955-56 and 1967-68, mostly through purchase. Farms of the size-groups 20-25 acres expanded only by 4 per cent whereas those of the size-group 100-150 acres increased by about 40 per cent.<sup>14</sup>

Although the ceiling laws enacted in the late 1950s and early 1960s were supposed to aim at reducing inequalities in landholdings, the very class nature of the land reforms carried out in the country inhibited the adoption of appropriate measures to break the concentration of land in a few hands. The land reform programmes had serious loopholes which had been deliberately allowed in the legislations in the interest of the landlords and no steps had been taken to remove them. These loopholes of the ceiling laws and their implementation were as follows :

(1) Ceiling in many states was imposed on the individual and not on the family. To effectively implement the ceiling, it was required to know how much land an individual owned throughout the state. If the landlord deliberately suppressed information about his landholding, there was hardly any machinery to check it except by chance detection.

(2) In some states the landowners were permitted to transfer land to other members of the family up to the ceiling limit. As a result land-

holders were able to retain large areas which made a mockery of the ceiling laws. This has been the experience in Bihar. In this state a bill of 1954 provided for the fixation of ceiling at 25 acres for a family of 5 members. If that bill had become law, it would have yielded a surplus of 10 lakh acres. The bill was, however, withdrawn after it was examined by the Joint Select Committee. The Ceiling Act in Bihar came into force in 1962. It provided that a landholder could transfer by way of gift any land held by him to his son, daughter, children of his son or daughter, or to such other person or persons who would inherit such land or would be entitled to a share therein after the death of the landlord. Due to this provision no surplus land could be made available for redistribution.<sup>15</sup>

(3) The legislations exempted tank fisheries, orchards, efficiently managed farms and religious institutions from their purview. If one could get good agricultural lands, with occasional fruit-bearing trees planted here and there, recorded as an orchard, the entire area went out of the ceiling provisions. Similarly, any area with slight depression which held water in flood or in rainy season could be declared as tank fishery and retained and used as ordinary agricultural land. Religious institutions could keep any amount of land above the ceiling. There was nothing to prevent any one from creating such a trust and transferring excess lands to it. The landlords had freely used the provisions for exemptions to evade ceiling. Recently the Central Land Reforms Commissioner has pointed out that taking advantage of the exemption provisions of state laws, big landholders converted their estates into orchards overnight while mechanised or cooperative farms were established in some states in great hurry for claiming exemption from the ceiling. As a result, the area of surplus vesting in the state governments was reduced considerably.<sup>16</sup>

(4) The legislations kept the levels of ceilings high in most parts of the country. In Gujarat the permissible retention per family varied from 19 acres of perennially irrigated land to 132 acres of other types of land; in Mysore from 27 to 216; in Rajasthan from 22 to 336. In Bihar each member of a family was permitted to hold 20 to 60 acres; in Madhya Pradesh from 25 to 75; in Andhra Pradesh from 27 to 324, and where a household exceeded five members, additional land was allowed at the rate of 6 to 72 acres per member; in Maharashtra from 38 to 126; in Orissa from 20 to 80; in Uttar Pradesh the ceiling level varied from 40 to 80 acres; in certain parts of Punjab and Haryana from 27 to 80 acres, while in some parts of the same states no ceiling on ownership was placed. In cases of double-cropped irrigated land the permissible retention was two-thirds of that of the irrigated single-crop land.<sup>17</sup> By no means can it be regarded that ceiling levels of this magnitude were aimed at reducing inequalities in landholdings.

(5) The legislations provided in most cases that every person holding land in excess of the ceiling should furnish a statement within a specified time. Often it was found that the persons concerned did not care to furnish the required statements. In such cases appropriate steps were

hardly taken. In Rajasthan the matter was more serious. The calling of declarations from persons holding 150 ordinary acres and above had been challenged in the courts and the Supreme Court had issued stay orders.<sup>18</sup>

(6) Apart from transferring land to other members of the family, which was often permitted by the legislations, the landowners had recourse to *mala fide* transfers of land to persons not belonging to their families with a view to evade ceiling. Often such transfers were made without the knowledge of the transferee. A real life example of sham transfer detected in West Bengal may be of some interest. A reputed gentleman in the district of Midnapore was recorded to be the owner of 25 acres of land. On enquiry it was found that the land was transferred to him without his knowledge.<sup>19</sup> An investigation into the implementation of land reform legislations in West Bengal reveals that the proportion of cultivable land transferred by ways other than inheritance to near relatives like son, brother, wife and so on varied broadly between 10 and 25 per cent of the total area of such transfer in eight districts of the state. The investigation shows that quite a number of *mala fide* transfers in West Bengal were made in anticipation of the law.<sup>20</sup> And of course, West Bengal is by no means the only state where such transactions had taken place. Recently, the Central Land Reforms Commissioner has pointed out that few states had taken effective steps to check illegal transfers of land after the ceiling was imposed. On the contrary, some states like Bihar and Madhya Pradesh recognised transfers made even after the law came into force. Similar was the position in Mysore where transfers were to be prohibited only from a date to be notified after the ceiling law came into effect. Worst of all was the Orissa legislation which did not contain any provision at all for prohibiting transfers. In Rajasthan, though the original Act provided for ignoring transfers after the introduction of the bill on ceilings, a subsequent amendment permitted them.<sup>21</sup>

(7) Again, recourse to litigation by the big landowners on one pretext or the other inhibited expeditious implementation of the land reforms. Vested interests in the countryside often adopted these methods just to delay the implementation and the Constitution provides for a considerable scope for such practices in the interest of landlords who enjoy a share in the state power. Whenever any attempt was made to find out surplus land legally, Article 226 of the Constitution was freely used to frustrate such an attempt. The landlords easily got injunctions and took shelter behind such injunctions for years on end. In West Bengal alone more than 21 lakh acres of agricultural surplus lands were thus hit by civil rules and civil suits.<sup>22</sup> As a result, as we have seen, only 1.6 million acres of land out of 2.3 million declared as surplus (69.6 per cent of the available surplus) had been acquired by the state governments. On the other hand inordinate delays in distributing even the acquired lands to the landless defeated the purpose of land reforms. Table III shows that the progress in the distribution of acquired lands was very slow. Excepting Jammu and Kashmir, the performances were far from satisfactory in all

the states. Even in U P, where it is claimed that a genuine effort had been made towards land reforms, the 119.6 thousand acres of distributed land accounted for only 50.3 per cent of the total-declared surplus. In the ten states for which we have the data for surplus area and area distributed, the total area distributed was less than 40 per cent of the total surplus. The main reasons behind this unsatisfactory state of affairs may be that the Revenue Departments in the various states, which were normally concerned with enforcing the ceiling laws showed a strong bias in favour of the big landowners and the big landowning classes had a direct pull with those who were in power, whether in the states or at the Centre, and could bring in indirect pressure on conscientious functionaries of the governments.

There is no reason to believe that these impediments were irremovable. Had there been real intention to break the concentration of land-ownership, the ceiling laws in the various states could be amended after their enactment so as to make the provisions foolproof. Ceiling could be lowered and placed on the basis of a family with no exemptions. Provisions could be made to examine all the old transfer deeds effected by big owners to cancel *mala fide* transfers and penalise such transferrers. Constitutional provisions regarding compensation and acquisition could be amended to ensure that they would not stand in the way of reforms. Co-operation of the organised movement of poor peasants and agricultural labourers could be sought for effective detection of *mala fide* transfers of land. But the bourgeois-landlord rule in the Centre and the states was least interested in removing the defects and loopholes in the legislations and their implementation, because that would go against the interest of big landholders. Again nothing had been done to change even partially the naked and pronounced pro-landlord bias in the working of the administrative machinery. The result had been disastrous.

In recent years there has been a revival of the tall talk of immediate and effective land reforms. Attempts have been made to create the impression that whatever might have been the failings in the past, the government is now determined to go ahead with radical land reforms. The question of lowering the ceilings on holdings and redistribution of surplus land had been raised. Simultaneously, some writers with pro-bourgeois-landlord bias have been assiduously propagating that lowering of land ceilings and redistribution of surplus land into small pieces would not serve any meaningful purpose. Before we attempt to examine the renewed discussion on radical land reforms and the steps taken by the Centre and the state governments towards this goal, we are tempted to make a slight digression to consider the arguments put forward by those writers.

First, it is argued that lowering of the ceiling would not be politically acceptable and if imposed, would be sabotaged in different ways.<sup>23</sup> This argument has no valid ground. The ceiling idea in the country is as old as the land reforms. Although the ceiling question gave rise to serious debate, there is no doubt that the idea of reducing inequalities in land-

holdings through ceilings has received a wide political acceptance, at least on the consideration of social justice. This is clearly borne out by the attention paid to the question of land ceilings in all the five-year plans and the enactment of ceiling legislation in almost all the states between 1958 and 1962. Irrespective of the provisions of these enactments, had they only been rigorously implemented, the concentration of land in a few hands could be reduced to some extent. But due to the loopholes deliberately allowed in the enactments and the defects in their implementation, which we have already discussed, the real purpose was not served. If this be called a sabotage, then surely it is and the bourgeois-landlord rule in the country must be held responsible for it.

Secondly, the objection is raised against lower ceilings and redistribution of surplus land to the landless on the ground that the result of such a course would be to increase the number of uneconomic non-viable holdings, which would be even worse than the existing uneconomic holdings because the surplus land to be surrendered would be of much inferior quality. As it would be beyond the means of the new holders to develop these lands, they would ultimately sell them and turn landless. Thus the entire operation of redistribution would be nullified. On the other hand there is a better chance of inferior land "being developed and brought to profitable productivity if allowed to remain in the large profitable farms which will have surplus to invest."<sup>24</sup> This type of analysis is intended to help the landlords in keeping their farms intact. It judges the question of viability of small holdings from the standpoint of market-oriented capitalist type of farming which enables the farmer to generate adequate marketable surplus and earn profits. If the farmer fails to produce a marketable surplus, his farm will be considered as uneconomic and non-viable.

This analysis ignores the fact that the imposition of lower ceilings and distribution of the surplus land even in small pieces to the landless peasants can unleash their creative energy. The people of West Bengal saw a practical demonstration of this factor during the regime of the second United Front Government. At that time more than 2.5 lakh acres of land had passed, in small pieces, to the hands of landless and land-hungry tillers. The United Front Government was worried about how they would cultivate the lands. But the peasants had solved the problem. All lands were properly cultivated.<sup>25</sup> The peasants did not cudgel their brains in tortuous attempt to make their farms economically viable but remained satisfied even if the scale of farming was at the subsistence level. It is most unlikely that after acquiring ownership rights they would again become landless by selling off their holdings which are economically non-viable.

Thirdly, it is emphasised that lowering of ceilings would nullify the major impetus for technological advances and reduce capital accumulation. Consequently, there would be no growth in agricultural output. The ceiling legislations should provide for the floor or the minimum size of holding which can ensure efficient utilisation of resources, create productive

employment, invest on modern inputs and raise production.<sup>26</sup> There is no substance in this argument. It is true that owners of small pieces of land may not be in a position to purchase sophisticated farm implements. But if these implements are made locally available by government or some other agencies, even the small farmers would hire them and readily utilise their services. This is a common experience in the irrigated tracts of Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana.<sup>27</sup>

It is true that cultivation on small pieces of land carries with it serious limitations, but there is no reason to believe that imposition of lower ceilings on landholding and redistribution of land would inhibit the growth of agricultural output. The productivity results of the small-size farming in Japan and Taiwan have successfully demonstrated that by intensive cultivation and adoption of modern methods it is possible to achieve sustained increases in agricultural production.<sup>28</sup> An idea of the scale of Japanese farming can be formed from the fact that the average farm of arable land was 1.1 hectares in 1968 with holdings under 1 hectare representing 67 per cent of the total cultivated area. The experience of small-scale farming in Japan and Taiwan is often disregarded on the ground that these countries are not comparable with India. But a survey conducted several years ago by the Bureau of Economics and Statistics of the Kerala Government shows that the smaller farms below two acres in extent were more intensively cultivated than the so called larger farms of the state.<sup>29</sup>

TABLE V  
EXPENDITURE ON LABOUR AND FERTILISERS AND  
OUTPUT PER CROPPED AREA BY SIZE-CLASSES OF  
OPERATIONAL HOLDING, FEROZEPUR, PUNJAB,  
1968-69

Size-Classes of Farms (acres)	Expenditure on Labour per acre (Rs)	Expenditure on Fertilisers per acre (Rs)	Output per acre (Rs)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
0— 5	109.83	6.34	880.24
5— 10	127.53	16.53	391.54
10— 20	132.02	23.69	609.74
20— 30	130.83	33.54	553.54
30— 50	106.16	32.40	562.57
50— 75	111.51	22.04	596.72
75—100	93.61	60.91	1022.71
100 & above	91.87	35.39	912.01

Source: The figures of this Table are taken from Table 2 in C H Hanumantha Rao, "Ceiling on Agricultural Landholding : Its Economic Rationale", *Review of Agriculture A-61, Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol VII No 26, 1972, the original source being A S Kahlon, "Studies in Economics of Farm Management, Ferozepur District, (Punjab), 1968-69," College of Basic Sciences and Humanities, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana.

Further it should be pointed out that the research work done during the last fifteen years has revealed that small farms are more efficient than the large ones in India. The percentage of area irrigated, cropping intensity or percentage of cropped area to the area held, labour input and the per acre output were invariably higher in the small farms than in the large farms. Some of the latest available evidence regarding the relative efficiency of farms of different sizes in Ferozepur, Punjab—the seat of 'green revolution'—shows that the performance of the farms with less than 5 acres of land was no less attractive than that of the large farms in 1968-69. Table V shows that the labour input per acre in the farms of the size-class 0-5 acres was less than that in the farms belonging to the size-classes 5-10 acres, 10-20 acres, 20-30 acres and 50-75 acres. The fertiliser input per acre was the lowest in the size-class 0-5 acres. But the value of the output per acre in this class was much higher than that in the size-classes from 5-10 acres to 50-75 acres.

It is quite clear from the above that the smallest farms are quite capable of showing better results than farms of larger sizes. In fact, the small farmers, in spite of many limitations, can increase their efficiency to a great extent if they are supported, as Ledejinsky points out,

by a network of governmental and other institutions disseminating technical knowledge and feeding the economics of scale with credit, other essential inputs, price supports and marketing facilities. In other words, this presupposes a deliberate shift of a share of state investments in the direction of those who need them most.<sup>30</sup>

Here even the plea, for a minimum size of holding to ensure efficient utilisation of resources and to invest on modern inputs and raise production, loses much of its force:

Fourthly, it is pointed out that irrespective of the area of 'surplus' land that the ceiling may release, it is unlikely to be significant for mitigating land hunger<sup>31</sup>. "The size of the cake is small, and the claimants far too many"<sup>32</sup> and the surplus land acquired through ceilings *per se* would help little to achieve the objective of uplifting the poor.<sup>33</sup> It is quite true that the redistribution of land alone cannot mitigate land hunger. Land reform measures can have only partial success if they are not accompanied by the abolition of big business control over the country's economy and rapid industrial development, through which a large portion of the rural unemployed can find employment and reduce the pressure on land to a significant extent. Those who would remain in the agricultural sector and get land in small pieces through redistribution must be able to improve their economic position through intensive cultivation, and contrary to the position taken by Minhas<sup>34</sup>, land redistribution would by itself "make a big dent on the problem of rural poverty in the sense of a considerable reduction in numbers below the poverty line."

Let us now turn to the renewed talk about land reforms. It is now openly conceded that the achievement of the earlier land reform measures was quite insignificant compared to the vastness of the land problem.

in the country. While speaking to newsmen at Begumpet airport in Hyderabad on October 4, 1971, the Prime Minister said that all states had been lagging behind in the implementation of land reforms and that there were many reasons for slow progress in regard to land reforms.<sup>86</sup> According to the Prime Minister, "the task of implementing the land ceiling measures was of a frightening magnitude because of lack of authentic land records in several states and the virtual absence of any administrative machinery to effectively and faithfully implement the proposed land reform measures."<sup>86</sup> But she is convinced that there is now greater awakening among the people and the state governments would have to react to this properly.<sup>87</sup> The determination to go ahead with radical land reforms has been expressed in different places and in different forms—speeches in Parliament, public meetings and political conferences, interviews with newsmen and election pledges in 1971 and 1972.

But what steps have been taken towards this goal? Since 1969 the Central Government had been wasting time in different ways. For example, Chief Ministers' conferences were held one after another. The Central Land Reforms Committee (CLRC) was set up. After a long delay it came out with a recommendation on the fixation of land ceilings, which was, as presented in a statement before the Parliament on August 4, 1971, as follows: "The ceiling for a family of five members may be fixed within the range of 10 to 18 acres of perennially irrigated land or land capable, of growing two crops." But a discrepancy was noticed between this statement and the subsequent report of the Agriculture Ministry, according to which the recommendations of the CLRC was: "The ceiling for a family of five members may be fixed within the range of 10 to 18 acres of perennially irrigated land or land under assured irrigation from government sources capable of growing two crops." This discrepancy arising from the addition of the words 'from government sources' in the Agriculture Ministry's report was sought to be explained away with the statement that there had been, in fact, no report by the CLRC at all; the Committee had only reached a 'consensus.' Whatever might be the case, the question of assured irrigation from government sources gave rise to a further time-killing debate.

As pointed out by Hare Krishna Konar in a note to the National Commission on Agriculture on the question of land reforms,

'any new land reform measure can have some meaning, if it is decided, legislated and implemented swiftly. Any prolonged debate and discussion can only provide the landlords with sufficient time to 'manage' their surplus land and fortify it with fake documents'.<sup>88</sup>

The prolonged debate and discussions at the governmental level gave ample scope for another spate of partitions and transfers by those landowners who had not completed this business during the period of implementation of earlier ceiling laws. Already tens of thousands of acres of land have changed hands without any hindrance from the state governments. In Madhya Pradesh alone stamp papers worth five to seven crores

rupees were sold in a few months after the announcement of the CLRC formula. Reports from Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra also tell the same story. Notwithstanding a few exceptions, other states are not lagging behind in this respect. There had even been thousands of 'divorces' in order to evade the new ceilings on landholdings.

It is not surprising that land ceiling bills that have been passed in recent times by some state legislatures were drafted along the lines of the Agriculture Ministry's version of the CLRC's recommendation for lowering the ceiling. It is now almost certain that these legislations, even if implemented honestly, are not going to ensure land to the landless and land hungry peasants. The reasons are obvious.

First, in the new legislations the ceilings are on the family holdings. Apparently this is an improvement over the earlier legislations in which the ceilings were on the individual holdings in a majority of the states. But in reality the new ceiling on the family holdings would prove ineffective. In the new legislations the family unit is defined as consisting of husband, wife and three minor children excluding adult sons. This definition enables every adult member of the same family to get another full ceiling. If the number of members exceeds five, the family can retain a maximum of one ceiling at proportionate acreage per head, as the first five.

Secondly, the question of ceilings for a family of five is 10 to 18 acres of perennially irrigated land or land under assured irrigation from government sources capable of growing two crops a year or its equivalents, that is, maximum 27 acres of land of assured irrigation for one crop a year or 54 acres of dry land. This quantum would mean exemptions from the ceiling in a big way. The net irrigated area in the country in 1969-70 was only about 22 per cent of the total net crop area. The area sown more than once was only 17.6 per cent of the total net area sown. Government canals accounted for only 37 per cent of the net irrigated area.<sup>89</sup> The ceiling of 10 to 18 acres would cover only 8 per cent of the total net crop area if the ceiling law is restricted to only such lands as are irrigated from government sources and only 4 per cent of the net crop area if the law is made applicable to land with more than one crop and assured irrigation both from government and private sources. About 18 per cent of the net crop area would be covered by the ceilings with upper limit of 27 acres of land with one crop in a year and assured irrigation. The rest 78 per cent of the net crop area will then be left for the ceiling range with upper limit of 54 acres of dry and non-assured wet land.

Thirdly, the way perennial irrigation is defined would further limit the scope of the legislations. According to this definition perennial means all the year round or at least ten months a year. The Gujarat ceiling law of 1970 actually incorporates this definition of perennial irrigation. It is well known that very few canals serve lands for irrigation purposes for as long as ten months in a year.

Fourthly, in spite of the announcement in the Lok Sabha on April 17, 1972 by the Union Agriculture Minister that forthcoming legislations

would limit the exemptions under the earlier enactments<sup>40</sup>, the exemptions given to lands possessed by charitable or religious trusts and cooperative societies, exemptions in favour of tea, coffee, rubber, cardamom and cocoa plantations would hardly yield any surplus land for redistribution to the landless and land-hungry peasants. The Union Minister's announcement also gave a hint that as desired by some Chief Ministers, there might be more relaxation by computing the area under orchards as for dry lands.<sup>41</sup>

Fifthly, the Centre had directed the state governments to make the land ceiling bills operative with retrospective effect from September 1970 so as to nullify the illegal transfers of land.<sup>42</sup> The retrospective effect from this time, even if strictly adhered to in the ceiling bills, would be of no use in circumventing the illegal transfers, because most of the partitions and transfers were made before that. Moreover some of the recent legislations have disregarded the Centre's directive. For example, the Land Ceiling bill passed by the Madhya Pradesh Assembly on April 19, 1972, was given retrospective effect from January 1, 1972. The Tamil Nadu bill passed on August 19, 1972, came into effect from March 1, 1972. The Uttar Pradesh bill passed on December 21, 1972, would be enforced with retrospective effect from January 24, 1971. The West Bengal bill passed on April 29, 1972 is an exception. It provided that transfers after August 1969 would be disregarded for determining the ceiling limit. Yet this retrospective effect would not help circumvent the illegal transfers because by and large they were completed before this time. Moreover, all the provisions of this legislation were enacted one year earlier as two Ordinances (later President's Acts)—one before the 1971 elections and the other by the middle of 1971. These Acts were in operation for one year or more. Now the provisions of these two Acts have been incorporated almost in toto into the present legislation.<sup>43</sup> One can hardly expect that this new Act would be effective because the earlier Acts embodying the same provisions as in the new did not compel the owners of land above the ceiling limit to part with a single acre of land. Illegal transfers were not detected when the 1971 Acts were in operation. How can it be expected that the implementation of the new Act would nullify the illegal transfers?

Sixthly, any attempt to find out surplus land legally would also be frustrated by the big landowners through a recourse to litigation because the Constitution still continues to provide considerable scope for such practices in the interest of the landlords. The Indian judiciary, which is an instrument of the government to safeguard the interests of the ruling classes would continue to protect the interests of the big landowners, if there is any serious effort to implement land reforms. This is exemplified by the fact that the verdicts given by the Kerala High Court had threatened the modest Kerala Land Reforms Act of 1969 to which the President's assent was given, and the Supreme Court dealt a blow to this Act by endorsing the decisions of the Kerala High Court. And the Central Government refused to protect the Act by including it in the Ninth Schedule of the

Constitution.

Seventhly, 'the task of implementing the land ceiling measures' would continue to be 'of frightening magnitude,' as the ceiling legislation would be enforced without authentic land records, effective administrative machinery and active cooperation of the organised movement of poor peasants and agricultural labourers the importance of which in the matter of detection of *mala fide* transfers had never been realized by the state governments in the past, except the United Front Governments of West Bengal and Kerala.

Lastly, whatever little surplus land that might be found is not to be given free to the landless and land-hungry peasants. They have to make payments to take possession of surplus land, the amounts of payments being decided by the state governments. P Sundaryya correctly pointed out in an article on land ceilings that this provision would practically prevent the poor from acquiring the land or they would be forced to sell their allotments to the richer sections in a short time.<sup>44</sup>

During the implementation of the earlier land reform enactments the bourgeois-landlord rule had been very careful not to inflict any real loss upon the big landowners. This is exemplified by the fact that colossal amounts had been paid to them as compensation for divesting them of the ownership of only a part of the land previously owned by them—the land taken over being mostly of inferior quality. The latest position regarding the total amounts of compensation payable, already paid and still outstanding cannot be studied due to lack of up-to-date information. The total compensation, including rehabilitation grant and interest, was estimated in 1969 to be at Rs 604.1 crores out of which Rs 281.0 crores had so far been paid to the ex-intermediaries either in cash or in the form of bonds. Table VI gives the state-wise break-up of the 1969 estimates of total compensation payable and amounts paid in cash and bonds to the ex-intermediaries.

The colossal amount of compensation paid in cash to the ex-intermediaries formed an important component of the capital which many of them later invested in village industries and commercial activities. Thus the land reforms transformed the big landowning classes from a class solely dependent on land and feudal privilege to a class of rural entrepreneurs who, although retaining a substantial interest in land, made considerable investments in rice mills, warehouses, refrigeration centres and the like.

The recent enactments also provide for substantial amounts of compensation for the surplus land. The Punjab Land Reforms bill passed on December 14, 1972, provides for a compensation of twelve times the fair rent (subject to a maximum of Rs 5000 per hectare) for the first three hectares, nine times the fair rent (subject to a maximum of Rs 3700 per hectare) for the next three hectares and six times the fair rent (subject to a maximum of Rs 2500 per hectare) for the remaining land.<sup>45</sup> The Land Ceiling Ordinance in Rajasthan issued on January 1, 1973, provides for

TABLE VI  
COMPENSATION PAYABLE AND PAID TO EX-INTERMEDIARIES  
(Rs crores)

State	Compensation Payable	Compensation Paid	
		in cash	in bonds
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Uttar Pradesh	198.4	29.5	106.5
Bihar	151.3	7.4	14.6
West Bengal	92.6	25.8	10.6
Rajasthan*	66.8	7.2	18.8
Andhra Pradesh	22.8	12.1	
Madhya Pradesh	22.1	16.1	
Gujarat**	12.8	10.8	
Orissa	9.0	5.6	
Tamil Nadu	7.3	6.3	
Mysore	6.0	2.8	
Former Hyderabad***	5.2	5.2	
Assam	5.0	1.4	
Maharashtra	3.0	N. A.	
Kerala	1.8	0.3	

\* Includes a sum of Rs. 3 crore under Nehru Award.

\*\* Includes payments of Maharashtra also.

\*\*\* Paid prior to reorganisation of Hyderabad State from 1953 to 1956.

Source : *Tojana*, Vol XIII, No 23, 1969, p 5.

a compensation of Rs 1600 per acre of irrigated land, Rs 1000 per acre of well-irrigated land, Rs 500 per acre for fertile, semi-fertile areas, Rs 100 per acre for semi-desert and Rs 75 per acre for desert.<sup>46</sup> These provisions for compensation would lead to further augmentation of the capital to be invested in village industries and commercial activities.

For a clear understanding of the class nature of the Indian land reforms a detailed discussion on the other aspects of the reforms, namely, abolition of intermediaries, tenancy legislations, consolidation of holdings and so on may be necessary. But such a detailed discussion cannot be made in a single paper. Hence we have not dealt with these aspects. Nevertheless the foregoing discussion brings out explicitly the class nature of the land reforms.

One of the declared aims of the earlier land reforms was:

to eliminate all elements of exploitation and social justice within the agrarian system, to provide security for the tiller of the soil and assure equality of status and opportunity to all sections of the rural population.<sup>47</sup>

An all-out attack to smash the feudal and semi-feudal fetters on the land relations was necessary for the fulfilment of this aim. But the land reforms were deliberately not directed towards this goal because the ruling bourgeoisie was not ready to sacrifice its class alliance with the landlords by smashing the feudal and semi-feudal land relations. What was aimed

at by the land reforms was to encourage capitalist enterprises in agriculture which would be able to successfully meet the growing demands for foodgrains at a cheaper rate for the industrial labour. Supply of cheap food to the industrial workers would mean lower labour cost, that is, higher margin of profit in industrial activity. Further, the capitalist enterprises in agriculture would satisfy the demand for agro-based raw materials for industries and expand the rural market for products of consumer goods industries by raising the purchasing power of the agricultural capitalists. The market for agricultural capital goods would also expand. But the development of agriculture on capitalist lines necessitated elimination of feudal and semi-feudal land relations. Thus we see that the bourgeoisie had to face a serious contradiction on what should be the nature of land reforms. The strategy of the bourgeoisie in its programmes of land reforms was to dominate the rural economy but not to the point of eliminating feudal interests. Therefore the bourgeoisie had to resolve the contradiction by bringing about changes in the system of land tenure and cultivation, which resulted in the coexistence of capitalist and semi-feudal land relations. The bourgeoisie had shed away some of the feudal characteristics of the agrarian relations and simultaneously allowed the big landowners to continue other forms of semi-feudal exploitation, by keeping land holdings more or less intact through various allowances and purposely permitting gaps in the land reform legislations, while at the same time inducing them to transform their estates into capitalist farms. Consistent with this tactical line, the government had been giving the erstwhile landlords and the upper crust of the rich peasantry direct financial, technical and other aids almost to the exclusion of the other strata of rural population. A bulk of the expenditure on the community development and national development schemes had been flowing into their pockets. Special loans were granted to them for the purchase of agricultural goods. Recently, in a note to the government the Central Land Reforms Commissioner has pointed out that the benefits of plan investment and technological break-through in agriculture had largely accrued to a new class of substantial landowners, which "wields considerable sway over all organs of democratic government from village panchayat to the Council of Ministers." <sup>48</sup> Myrdal has also expressed a similar view. In India and other South Asian countries, he says:

All the significant policy measures for agricultural uplift adopted by the governments—whether technological or institutional—have tended to shift the power balance of the rural structure in favour of the privileged classes. The piecemeal reforms have bolstered the political, social, and economic position of the rural upper strata on which the present governments depend for crucial support. Not only has the political influence of this group increased, but its interest in perpetuation of the status quo has been enhanced ... these forces exert a strong pressure for conservatism in regard to the agrarian structure, however radical the tone of policy resolutions and certain laws...Piecemeal reforms have thus dimmed the prospects for radical reforms in agriculture. . . . <sup>49</sup>

There is no doubt that in this way the twin objectives of the present government and the capitalist interest in the country, namely, political alliance and collaboration with the feudal interest and increase in agricultural production, specially in production of foodgrains by inducing the rich landlords, old and new, to undertake an enterprising interest in agriculture had been on the whole successfully achieved. It is also beyond doubt that as an inevitable corollary of the agrarian policies pursued by the government this success had been achieved at the cost of small and poor peasants, tenants, share-croppers and agricultural labourers with increasing inequalities in the distribution of income and deepening and broadening poverty in the rural sector.

The recent legislations are also another step towards broadening the base of the bourgeois-landlord rule in rural areas through further strengthening the political alliance of the capitalist interest with the feudal interest. The ruling classes have no intention of breaking the concentration of land in the hands of a few and distributing the land to the landless. A very small amount of land may be given to the landless and land-hungry peasants only to create an illusion that through these new legislations, radical and progressive measures are going to be adopted. But if the past is any guide, the real purpose is not different from that of the previous land reform measures.

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- 1 Suresh Chandra Mathur, "Land Reforms, Progress and Problems," *Tojana*, Vol XIII, No 23, 1969, p 11.
- 2 Planning Commission, *Fourth Five Year Plan, 1969-74*, p 174.
- 3 Editorial entitled "An Integrated Approach to Land Reforms", *Tojana*, Vol XIII, No 23, 1969, p 2.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p 2.
- 5 Planning Commission, *op. cit.*
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 M L. Dantwala, "Towards an Efficient and Just Land System," *Tojana*, Vol XIII, No 23, 1969, p 3.
- 8 M L Dantwala, "Incentives and Disincentives in Indian Agriculture," *Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, Vol XXII, No 2, 1967, p 19.
- 9 This interpretation of the word 'tiller' has been advanced by Sulekh C Gupta in his *India's Agrarian Structure*, p 7.
- 10 The idea of this classification is borrowed from V B Singh, "Agrarian Relations in India" in Ignacy Sachs (Ed.) *Agriculture, Land Reforms and Economic Development*, p 37.
- 11 Recently a survey on the landholdings has been conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation of the Government of India. The results of this survey are not yet available.
- 12 Wolf Ladejinsky, "Land Ceilings and Land Reforms", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol VII, Nos 5—7, Annual Number 1972, p 403.
- 13 The figure for declared surplus area in Andhra Pradesh in Table III is only 200 acres, which is obtained from a research work published a year earlier. As Ladejinsky's study does not give the figure for declared surplus land, we have not made the

necessary correction in our computation.

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- 15 Planning Commission, *Implementation of Land Reforms*, p 249.
- 16 *Asian Recorder*, October 1-7, 1971, pp 10384-85.
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- 21 *Asian Recorder*, October 1-7, 1971, p 10385.
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- 23 V M Dandekar and Nilakantha Rath, "Poverty in India, Policies and Programmes", *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol VI, No 2, 1971, p 122.
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 Hare Krishna Konar, *op. cit.*, pp 6-7.
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- 29 See "Land Reforms in Kerala, an Interview with Chief Minister Achutha Menon", *Tojana*, Vol XVI, No 10, 1972, pp 506-507.
- 30 Ladejinsky, *op.cit.*, p 404.
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- 34 B S Minhas, *op. cit.*
- 35 See *Indian Economic Diary*, Vol III, No 7, Feb 12-18, 1972, p 1354.
- 36 *The Economic Times*, June 3, 1972.
- 37 *Indian Economic Diary*, *op. cit.*
- 38 "Land Reforms: What Should It Mean?", *People's Democracy*, June 25, 1972.
- 39 See "Land Ceiling and the New Farm Entrepreneur" by the New Delhi Correspondent, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol VII, No 19, 1972, p 915.
- 40 *Indian Economic Diary*, Vol III, No 17, April 22-28, 1972, p 1472.
- 41 *Ibid.*
- 42 *Indian Economic Diary*, Vol III, No 23, June 3-9, 1972, pp 1537-38.
- 43 See Hare Krishna Konar, "Real Face of West Bengal's New Land Reforms Act", *People's Democracy*, May 14, 1972.
- 44 See *People's Democracy*, July 30, 1972.
- 45 See *Asian Recorder*, January 8-14, 1973, p 11176.
- 46 See *Asian Recorder*, February 5-11, 1973, p 11221.
- 47 Planning Commission, *Third Five Year Plan*, p 220.
- 48 See *Asian Recorder*, October 1-7, 1971, p 10385.
- 49 Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, London 1968, Vol II, p 1367.

N VANAMAMALAI

## *Materialist Thought in Early Tamil Literature*

IDEALIST as well as Marxist scholars have directed their efforts at reconstructing materialist thought from the dim mist of Indian antiquity. Das Gupta, Dakshin Narayan Sastry, and Chakravarthi Nayanar are among those of the idealist persuasion who tapped Sanskrit sources for their investigations. They exhibited a marked preference for *Advaita*. Using the very same sources Debi Prasad Chattopadhyaya and K Damodaran also attempted to reconstruct ancient Indian materialism, but employing the Marxist approach. In the absence of original texts of ancient materialist philosophy written by materialists, all these scholars had to go in for the exposition of materialism contained in the statements of materialism's opponents in both the vedic and non-vedic systems. Such a method was unavoidable as no original text written by teachers of the *Lokayata* school was available for study. In the reconstruction of ancient Indian materialism, it is particularly noticeable that the South Indian sources have been comparatively unexplored. Neither has any scholar yet examined the ancient Tamil literary sources to seek materialist trends and to set them alongside the *Purvapaksha* description of materialism in the Sanskrit sources.

This paper aims at examining certain imprints and descriptions of materialist thought found in ancient Tamil literature. Unfortunately

there is no readymade philosophical treatise of the period preserved and handed down to us. We have, therefore, to turn to literary texts and mainly to *Purananuru* and *Pattupattu*, anthologies of poetry on the secular life of the Tamils between the second century B C and the third century A D.

Philosophical disputations of the various schools of metaphysics are recorded in Buddhist and Jain works of a later period, that is, between the third and ninth centuries A D. In these, materialist thought called *Bhutavada* and *Lokayata* is taken up for censure and attack. This paper will also examine the account of *Lokayata* in the Buddhist work, *Manimekalai*, and in the Jain text *Neelakesi*. The period after the ninth century A D is outside the compass of this study.

Chakravarthi Nayanar in his introduction to *Neelakesi* has this to say about *Bhutavada* in Tamil Nadu :

There lived in Nalanda near Rajgriha a Brahmin named Madhava. He had a son named Koshtilla and a daughter named Sari. Koshtilla went to South India to study *Bhutavada*. Sari married a Brahmin from Southern India called Tishya. She had a son named Upatishya called so after his father. He had another son named after his mother Sariputta. In a village nearby, there was a purohit whose wife Modgal bore a son. He was called Moggalana. Both Sariputta and Moggalana studied under Sanjaya. Hearing about Buddha, they went to meet him. They joined the Buddhist order.

Chakravarthi Nayanar, himself a Jain, mentions that *Bhutavada* or *Lokayata* was taught in the South in the sixth century B C and that these schools of thought attracted scholars from the North. Dakshin Narayan Sastry and Chakravarthi Nayanar also admit that *Lokayata* was one of the earliest systems of thought prevalent in the South. But they did not collect evidence for their conclusions from Tamil or other South Indian sources. The chronology of the literatures of the southern languages with the exception of Tamil cannot be assigned to a period earlier than the tenth century A D. Only *Sangam* literature in Tamil is assigned to a period ranging from the second century B C to the third century A D. It is, therefore, reasonable to look for traces of early materialist thought in *Sangam* works of this period and in Jain and Buddhist works of the period closely following the *Sangam* age.

#### *Nature of the Sources*

To get a clear idea of the nature of the sources, one should know the purport of the themes of the *Sangam* works. It can be said that all books of the *Sangam* literature are anthologies of compositions of different poets belonging to different periods, and classified into two main genres *Aham* and *Puram*. *Aham* poetry is devoted to pre-marital and post-marital love while *Puram* poetry deals with social life in all its aspects. As this study is centred mainly on *Purananuru*<sup>a</sup>, it is pertinent to highlight the theme of this book as representative of the *Sangam* literature.

*Purananuru* is an anthology of poems numbering 400. We get

in its scenes of social life of the Tamils from the second century B C to the third century A D. The poems pursue purely secular themes such as the life of the tribal people of the hills; agricultural groups of the river valley regions; their tribal wars; the wars of the tribal chiefs against rising feudal monarchs; cattle-rearing; panegyrics addressed to the chieftains by the folk minstrels (*Panars*); ethical precepts addressed to rulers and to people in general and a host of other themes directly related to the social life of the period. Going through this work we can conclude that tribal life was disintegrating and feudal states were just emerging. The later poems of the anthology speak about three kingdoms, the Chera, Chola and Pandya, with all the rivalries and wars among them. That leads us to the conclusion that by the time the later poems were composed tribal life had been destroyed as a whole in the Tamil country, except in the remote mountain fastnesses which lay out of reach of the mainland. Even to these remote hills, the *Panars* (folk minstrels) and *Viraliars* (folk danseuses) went carrying their song and dance.. *It was a period of detribalisation leading to the emergence of feudalism.*

The nature of the first source has been characterised. Here one looks for answers to the questions : What do the poets think of life ? Is it real or illusory ? What is their conception of happiness ? What is their idea of cosmogony ? What ethical precepts do they express ? Such questions are discussed by many of the poets in a casual manner, while they address their songs to the people in general or to someone in particular.

The second source consists of two epics, *Manimekalai* and *Neelakesi*, Buddhist and Jain respectively in their religious inspiration. In addition to the stories related in these epics, there is a chapter in each devoted to the philosophical and religious systems of the period. The first epic may be assigned to the third century A D; the second was written later, sometime between the fifth and ninth century A D. Each contains a description of *Bhutavada* (materialism). The account in *Manimekalai* is the first systematic account of materialism in Tamil sources, even though it is in the *Purvapaksha* form, that is, the statement of a system by its opponent.

*Manimekalai* has a commentary attached to it by a learned commentator of the medieval age. He gives valuable information on various schools of *Lokayata* and systems of logic which dominated the scene at the time. Though a few centuries separate the age of the commentator from that of the author of the epic, his learned commentary throws a flood of light on the state of materialist thought at the time of the epic and in later centuries. I have made use of these sources and compared their views with certain North Indian sources, both vedic and Jain, where distortions and differences in the description of the categories of *Lokayata* are noticeable.

### *The Content of the Puram Poems*

To return to the broad classification of the themes of the *Sangam* anthologies such as *Aham* and *Puram*, the material that finds a place under each of these heads is only life on earth. Very few poems mention life

after death, though there is an Elyseum called *Thevar Ulagu*, literally the World of the Gods. An overwhelming majority of the *Puram* poems speak about life on earth and how to make it happy. The early Tamil poets thought of domestic bliss within the (external) social set-up as the highest ideal of human life. Even after the rise of private property and the state, Thiruvalluvar set forth three ideals for the human condition : ethical life, acquisition of wealth and a happy love life. He taught that a good ethical life on earth, if combined with wealth, will lead to happiness. He was opposed to the theory that renunciation of worldly life guaranteed happiness in the next world. The ideal of *Moksha* called *Veedu* in Tamil, was not advocated by Thiruvalluvar. *Sangam* and later poems also contain a robust affirmation of life under the sun.

What prompted the life-affirming materialistic outlook reflected in the *Puram* anthology? Why did the later literature incline towards a religious outlook of denying the reality of life on earth and upholding the ideal of a better life in another world, or, in other words, a state of absolute renunciation of desires and passions?

The period of composition of the poems of *Puram* extended over five centuries or more. This was a period of detribalisation of the hunting and pastoral tribes and the emergence of private property, feudalism and the state. *The rapid change in the social formation leading to class society on the one hand and non-class tribal society on the other, existing side by side, led to a contradiction between the tribal ideology and the emerging feudal ideology of religion and god.*

### *Effect of Detribalisation*

Debi Prasad Chattopadhyaya has this to say about the incomplete detribalisation of tribal life and the consequent change in the modes of thought of the people :

If therefore it is true that the life of the Indian masses remained detribalised only incompletely, then the sources of their dominant world outlook should logically be sought in the beliefs and ideas of the tribal peoples though the original significance of this world outlook, like that of the tribal survivals themselves, must have passed into its opposite. What interests us most is the original nature of this world outlook. We are going to argue that it must have been instinctively materialistic or proto-materialistic — the collective labour of the tribal life being a guarantee of that. Interestingly, surviving as it did in the lives of the working masses, this proto-materialistic character was not completely lost from the popular 'Weltanschauung' called the *Lokayata*.<sup>4</sup>

From this, it is clear why there was a materialistic life-affirming outlook among the early poets of the *Puram* anthology. The materialist world outlook, which had its origin in the collective labour of pre-class society, persisted even after the partial destruction of its basis and the emergence of a different basis.

*Origin of Idealism*

As for the second part of the question raised above, Engels pointed out :

From tribes there developed nations and states. Law and politics arose and with them the phantastic reflection of human things in the human mind — religion. In the face of all these creations which appeared in the first place to the products of the mind and which seemed to dominate the human societies, the more modest productions of the working hand retreated into the background, the more so since the mind that planned the labour process already at a very early stage of the development of society was able to have this planned labour carried out by other hands than its own. All merit to the swift advance of civilisation was ascribed to the mind and to the development and activity of the brain. Men became accustomed to explain their actions from their thoughts instead of from their needs, and so there arose in course of time that idealistic outlook on the world which especially since the downfall of the ancient world has dominated man's mind.<sup>5</sup>

And again,

Division of labour only became truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears. From this moment onwards, consciousness can really flatter itself that it is something without conceiving something real, from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of pure theory, theology, philosophy, ethics etc.<sup>6</sup>

In the light of these formulations by Marx and Engels, I propose to examine in the literary sources of the *Sangam* age the following :

- (i) the life-affirming materialistic outlook of the ancient Tamil poets;
- (ii) the materialistic conception of the origin of the universe on the basis of the theory of the five primary elements;
- (iii) some aspects of their ethics, and
- (iv) the reconstruction of their theory of epistemology from the statements attributed to *Lokayatas* by the Buddhist and Jain poets who flourished in the period closely following the *Sangam* age.

Now to the first question : What is the conception of the ideal life according to the poets of the *Puram* anthology ? Let us take a few examples from *Puram* poets which illustrate the poet's conception of a life of happiness :

He embraced the shoulders of his beloved one,  
 Wore garlands of flowers gathered from an odorous park,  
 Smeared his chest with sandal paste,  
 Destroyed his enemies,  
 Supported his friends,  
 Never bowed to the mighty.  
 He never trampled upon the weak,  
 Never betrayed his adherents.

He annihilated invading armies, and routed his enemies.  
 He rode his chariot drawn by fast steeds,  
 He rode upon his royal elephant.  
 He treated minstrels with delicious food and sweet wine,  
 Spoke to them gentle words of warm affection.  
 He lived a perfect and ideal life.

Burn him or bury him :

Dispose of his body in whatever manner you like.

It does not matter to him how you do it after his death.<sup>7</sup>

This is a poem composed by Pereyil Muruvalar on the death of his friend, Namby Neduncheliyan, a king of the Pandya dynasty. The conception of the ideal life contained in these lines is suffused with a materialistic outlook on life. This world is real. The problems of this material world must be solved. Man should not try to escape from them, thinking that the world is an appearance and reality is beyond his grasp.

The desire to lead a happy life and to be youthful and energetic stirred all ancient people. It led them into efforts to discover the 'elixir of life'. Ancient *Siddhas* and *Tantrikas* were also engaged in the pursuit of *Amrita Dhara* and deluded themselves that they had discovered it in their heads as a result of *Tantrika* practices. By contrast, we have a poem in the *Puram* anthology in which the poet offers a prescription for a youthful energetic life on earth, till death puts an end to it.

Pisir Aanthaiar, a poet, paid a visit to his friend, Ko Perum Cholan (King of the Chola country). The poet, despite his advanced age, appeared youthful and energetic. The king asked him about the secret of his youthfulness. Why had not a single hair on his head turned grey? Why were there no wrinkles on his forehead?

You ask me why my hair has not turned grey in spite of my old age?

My noble wife and children are wise.

My younger relatives cooperate with me.

My king protects us from evil things.

Many wise men who are humble and gentle live in my village.<sup>8</sup>

The secret of youthfulness, according to this poet, lies not in the practice of *Tantrika Yoga*, the realisation of 'soul' or other mental disciplines, but in amity among all those who live with one. This explanation arises out of a materialist outlook on life. The presumption is strengthened by the name of the poet, Pisir Athan Thanthaiar (Pisir : name of village, Athan Thanthaiar : father of Athan). T N Subramaniam<sup>9</sup> finds the word, *Aathan*, mentioned in *Thevaram* along with *Samanar* (Jain ascetics). Both *Samanar* and *Aathar* were supposed by commentators to refer to the *Digambara* sect of Jain ascetics. But *Thevaram* denounces *Aathar* as fish-eaters and liquor addicts. Subramaniam rightly points out that *Aathar* could not refer to *Digambaras*, who abstained from non-vegetarian food; it could refer only to a settlement of *Ajivikas*. The adherents of this school were called *Aptha*, which in Tamil would be *Aathan*. There were very strong elements of materialism, such as the theory of *Pancha Bhutas* and

the movement of the world due to the motion of atoms, in the *Ajivika* system. Moreover, *Aathan* is certainly not a Brahmin name. We can reasonably suppose that this poet was influenced by the ancient *Lokayata* directly, or through *Ajivika* thought.

Let us now turn to another genre of poems, known as *aarrupadai* in the *Puram* anthology. The general theme of this class of poems is the advice given to a needy and hungry folk minstrel, going in search of a patron, by another who is returning after receiving bountiful gifts from a chief or ruler. The latter praises his patron and advises the former to go to him and sing his praise in order to receive rich gifts. In such poems, the last part is a blessing to the benefactor. We find in poems of a later period the poet invoking gods and goddesses to bless the kings. The poet calls upon Siva, Vishnu or Durga to send his or her choicest blessings to his patron. *Puram* poets do not seek the help of gods or goddesses, but themselves bless their patrons. They do not arrogate to themselves the functions of a pontiff or *Shaman*. The blessing is an expression of gratitude to the donor, who has relieved them of their suffering. It is thus a moot question whether these poets believed in the intervention of a god or goddess in the affairs of human life. The poems indicate (indirectly and sometimes directly) that they did not believe in divine intervention.

Let me cite some illustrations of verses of blessings of this type. The author of this poem is Nedumaran and the patron is Mudukudumipperu-Vazhuti, a Pandyan king :

Long live Kudumi  
Who gave gold and water to the minstrels,  
Who celebrates the festival of the sea  
Let his years of life be as many  
As the sands on the bed of the river Pahruli.<sup>10</sup>

This is in praise of Chola Nalankilli by the poet Thamarpalkarmanar :

May your years (of life)  
Extend like sands on the seashore.<sup>11</sup>

Nanmaran, a Pandyan king, is praised by the poet Maruthur Ilanaganar. It is to be noted that although the god, Murugan, is referred to, his blessing is not invoked :

May your years be as many as the sands  
Washed by the foam-topped waves  
On the shores of the eastern sea  
Where stands the God Neduvel.<sup>12</sup>

In another poem, the poet compares his patron to Kalan, the god of death; Balarama; Murugan in his fury against enemies; valour in battle; and fame among kings. Then follows a blessing :

Decorate suppliant minstrels in gold ornaments,  
Drink fragrant wine brought by Yavanas  
From the hands of pretty young maidens,  
Remain happy for years and years.<sup>13</sup>

The above discussion shows that these ancient Tamil poets were this-worldly, considered this world to be real, held that happiness had to be sought here and that this happiness should be related to the social ethics of the period. All these point to a materialistic outlook. Although a consistent system of thought was not worked out, these thoughts arose out of a particular world outlook which was essentially materialistic.

### *The Origin of the Universe*

The materialistic outlook of the early poets is also evident in their conception of the components out of which this world is made and also how life arose out of material elements. Dakshin Narayan Sastry distinguishes the schools of *Lokayatas* on the basis of whether they believed in four or five elements constituting the material universe. He believes that originally the *Lokayatas* believed in five elements and that later, owing to the onslaught of the idealist schools of thought, they revised the theory of elements and accepted four. The original belief was that the universe consisted of earth, water, fire and air, to which they later added *akasa*, sky or ether. Referring to this, Sastry says,

*Akasa* is not an element. Only four elements are perceived. These elements are in atomic condition when mixed together in the proper proportion and according to a certain order become living organisms.<sup>14</sup>

In *Puram* poems, both these suggestions find confirmation. Some poems mention four and some other five elements. What matters here is not the number but the nature of these elements. There is no doubt that these elements were conceived of as material substances. A *Puram* song has the following lines :

The sea with three-fold sources of water,  
The broad earth, the wind that blows,  
The empty sky, all these can be measured, but not your greatness.<sup>15</sup>

This poem is meant as a panegyric to a chieftain. It describes four elements and their unlimited magnitude of power. The sky is left out. Another poem mentions all five :

The world packed with solid earth,  
The sky above the earth,  
The wind that blows under the sky,  
The fire that is on the head of the air,  
Water opposed to fire.  
These are the five elements,  
Each with its peculiar nature.<sup>16</sup>

This poem mentions the five elements as opposites and related to each other. It also mentions that the five elements possess their peculiar natures and properties. The nature of the earth is solidity. The sky is ethereal and is above the earth. Something divides these two elements. Between the earth and the sky is another material element, different from the two but with its own peculiar properties. Air is necessary for fire to arise. Water and fire are contraries. A generalisation is made after

enumerating the five elements and their properties : each has its property and all together have a general nature, *Iyarkai* or *Svabhava*.

### *The Rise of Mythology*

As opposed to this theory, the theory of the creation of these five elements by an all-powerful god emerges in the later period of the anthology. It is an effort to deny the theory of *Svabhava*, which causes all movements of the universe including consciousness. The motion of the universe or the movement of consciousness does not presuppose a creator or a universal cause which motivates all movement. The *Lokayata* view of consciousness is explained by Dakshin Narayan Sastry thus :

Consciousness is a function of the body. Consciousness does not inhere in particles of matter. When these particles come to be arranged into specific forms they are found to have signs of life.<sup>17</sup>

Life and consciousness are identical. Our thinking power is destroyed with the dissolution of the elements by whose combination it is evolved. When the body perishes, consciousness perishes too. There is nothing to transmigrate. Behaviour is explained as due to external stimulation, as much as the closing or opening of the lotus is due to the presence or absence of the sun. There is no creator.

After the rise of property and the state and after the leisured class had come on the scene, the theory of the creation of the world was promulgated. But the creator was conceived of as the creator of the five elements, and not as the creator of the universe and the living beings. The crude attempt to explain the origin of the universe not by the combination of the five elements, but by superimposing a higher power over them, is exposed at the outset when we read the lines :

The great one who wields the axe created water, earth, fire, air and the sky. He is the leader of those with unwinking eyes and spotless bodies. They wear unfading flower garlands. They eat fragrant food.<sup>18</sup>

The great one is Siva: he wields the axe. Siva is an anthropomorphic conception. He is the leader of a group of gods. To distinguish them from human beings, they are described as possessing spotless bodies and unwinking eyes. It is strange, however, that they need food to stay alive. They are merely a tribal unit transferred to a different world, called god's world. Without completely severing itself from its tribal moorings, this conception of a creator of five elements arises. Lines found in *Maduraikanchi*<sup>19</sup> a long work that can be assigned to the first century A D also illustrate this conception.

When the question of food is raised, we must again turn to the *Puram* poets to understand its importance and its relation to the elements and to life. A poet advises a king to provide irrigation for the lands in his dominion, stating why he should do so :

The shape of food is food,  
Food is water and earth.

When water and earth combine  
 Then body and life arise.  
 After sowing, if the land depends  
 On the mercy of the sky, the king owning such land  
 Will not live in prosperity.<sup>20</sup>

The first lines read like a puzzle. The puzzle is solved when we read a line in *Manimekalai* which uses the same words and explains it thus: "The body of man is the shape of food."<sup>21</sup> The shape of food means the human body. Food itself, the poet explains, is a combination of two elements, water and earth. It calls upon the king to provide conditions for the combination of these two elements. Here there is no mention of a creator or the mercy of the gods. Man can produce food by knowing the *Svabhava* of elements and intervene to produce conditions for their combination to attain his set goal, namely, the production of foodgrains.

### *The Rise of Class Society*

After complete detribalisation, the feudal mode of production made rapid advance and engulfed the whole of ancient Tamil Nadu. It brought in its train the class conflict between the landowners and the dispossessed tribes. While production increased, the working people went hungry. In the old society, they gathered or produced food in common and received a share. They got equal shares or went hungry together. The bonds of collective labour bound them together. *That bond of the collective was destroyed by the new production relations.* Class society based on exploitation of man by man had come to stay. Still folk memories persisted. The poets who were close to the exploited working people, themselves hailing from their ranks, felt sympathy for them but could not show the way to change the state of affairs. They could only raise their voice against poverty and the hunger of their brothers, or appeal to and advise the king and the exploiting class to give the surplus grains to the poor so as to relieve their hunger. They preached equality of men's suffering when they were faced with hunger. To quote from a *Puram* poem:

To one who rules under one umbrella  
 The land surrounded by the seas and  
 To one who watches the crops keeping awake  
 Day and night in fear of wild animals,  
 The need of food is one measure and cloth is one yard.  
 Other needs are also equal.  
 To give to the needy is the good use of wealth.

If you wish to enjoy wealth (without giving), it will escape you.<sup>22</sup>

The equality spoken of here could not be realised in feudal society. But the poet recalls the oral traditions about the tribal past when production was by collective labour and sharing of the produce was in equal measure. In this new mode of production, the working people toiled hard and kept awake day and night to keep wild animals away from the crops ripe for harvest. But the ruler and the wealthy appro-

priated the product of the labour of the working people and did not leave them with enough to keep body and soul together. *This injustice strikes the poet.* But he could not revive the 'golden age' nor could he think of a change in which everyone would work and get an equal share as in the old tribal society. He offers an ethical precept to the wealthy. Such exhortations by many poets fell, of course, on deaf ears.

### *Contrast between the Present and the Past*

Another poet, while preaching generous gifts of food to the poor, tells a king that only generous donors of food will earn praise and that those who withhold gifts of food are those who do not realise the greatness of the old traditions of their ancestors.

Those who wanted to remain immortal in this evanescent world  
Had left their fame to survive them after their death.

Wealthy men whom no one can approach

Do not know the traditions and customs of their ancestors:

For these men do not give to the needy.<sup>28</sup>

The ancestors spoken of were the tribal chiefs whom any minstrel could approach and receive gifts from. The wealthy men of the poet's age could not be approached or even seen by the common man. They departed from the time-honoured traditions and customs. From the context, the tradition can be understood to be the folk tradition of the collective sharing of food and other things.

In the two examples given above, the poets contrast the wealth and poverty existing side by side. The suffering of the poor impels them to seek a way out. They can only think of the days gone by, the memories of which are handed down from the not too distant past. It is to be noted that the poets do not call upon the wrath of heaven or punishment of gods on those who hoard and do not feel compassion for their fellowmen. They only try to cajole or reprimand the wealthy, pointing out that if they wished to earn fame, they must give; if not, they are not worthy sons of their ancestors. Fame, a mundane incentive, is dangled before the miserly rich as a bait to induce them to give away their surplus. It is obvious that the outlook of these poets is essentially materialistic.

### *Acculturation : Vedic, Buddhist and Jain*

As the thoughts of the ancient materialists faded, the growth of feudalism produced spiritualistic and idealistic thought. Just at that time, the Brahmanic thought of the early centuries of the Christian era diffused to the south with all the sacrificial rites and the subjective idealism of the Upanishads. The stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata also spread throughout Tamil Nadu in oral versions. A process of acculturation had begun.

Even before the arrival of Brahmin colonies, there were Jains and Buddhists living in the far south. Scholars like K A Neelakanta Sastry thought that the Brahmins were the first to immigrate to the south in the

first century A D. But recent research into the corpus of Tamil Brahmin inscriptions by I V Mahadevan has brought to light new evidence which has upset the old conclusions. Grants and aids to Jain ascetics are the themes of many of these inscriptions. Mahadevan dates a few of these inscriptions to the period between the second century B C and the first century A D.<sup>24</sup> It appears that the first contact that Tamil culture had with northern cultures was in connection with the Buddhist and Jain systems of thought.

As in the country of their birth, the conditions of social transformation in South India were ripe for absorbing these ideas. The same religions which, through their own monastic orders gave an illusory substitute to the broken bonds of unity of a detribalised people in North-Eastern India, gave the same dispensation to the detribalised people in Tamil Nadu. These religions drew numerous adherents. The Jain and Buddhist monks produced works on grammar and ethics. The first epic, *Silappadikaram*, was the work of a Jain ascetic and *Manimekalai* that of a Buddhist poet, Sathanar. The first epic is not a treatise on philosophical speculation but the story of a merchant, Kovalan, and his wife, Kannagi. But *Manimekalai* is the story of the daughter of Kovalan, the hero of the first epic, through a concubine, Madhavi. The daughter renounces the life of a courtesan and enters a Buddhist monastery. Her travels abroad are described in the epic. She meets the teachers of the various systems of philosophy then extant in Tamil Nadu and listens to expositions on *Alavai Vadam* (Mimamsa), *Saivism*, *Brahma Vadam*, *Vaishnavism*, *Veda Vadam*, *Ajeevaka Nirkanta* (Jainism) and *Bhuta Vadam* (Materialism)

The epic is considered to have been written in the third century A D. This is how the *Bhutavadin* explains his system :

When certain flowers and jaggery are boiled together, liquor is born which produces intoxication. Just as when elements combine, consciousness arises. Consciousness dissolves with the dissolution of the elements composing them like the disintegration of sound. Elements combine to produce living *Bhutas* and from them other living *Bhutas* will be born. Life and consciousness are synonymous. From non-living *Bhutas* consisting of two or more elements rise non-living *Bhutas* of the same type. *Lokayata* is a variant of this system that agrees in fundamentals with this system. Observation is the method by which knowledge is obtained. Inferential thinking is illusory. This worldly life is real. Its effect is experienced in this life only. The theory that we enjoy the fruits of our actions in our next birth or in another world is false.<sup>25</sup>

The author of an old commentary of this work distinguishes three schools of materialism from what is stated in these lines: (a) *Bhutavada*, (b) *Lokayata* and (c) *Sarvaka*.

*Bhutavadins* believe in five elements whereas *Lokayatas* and *Sarvakas* believe in only four. (They do not consider *akasa* as an element.) *Bhutavadins* classify the combination of the five elements as two types, as *Bhutas* with life and *Bhutas* without life. This classification is not accepted by *Lokayatas*.

Consciousness, according to *Lokayata*, arises out of the combination of five lifeless elements and not out of the combination of *Bhutas* with life and *Bhutas* without life. Perhaps they believed that this distinction of *Bhutas* having life and without life is contradictory to a consistent materialist explanation of the origin of life and consciousness. We are unable to know what the *Sarvakas* thought of this classification of the *Bhutas*. The *Bhutavadin* himself admits that there are variants of this system.

After listening to the exposition of *Bhutavada*, Manimekalai poses a few questions which are supposed to puncture his argument. According to the story, she knew her past as a result of a miracle in her life. She tells the materialist that she knows about her previous births. The materialist replies that hallucinations arising out of faith in gods, illusions created in dreams and the unconscious state are to be doubted: they are false. Since his reply implies that he would rely only on direct observation (*Katchi* or *Pratyaksha*), she puts him a teasing question: "How can you know who your parents are except through inference? Truth cannot be known without employing forms of reasoning not based on direct observation. Therefore, do not view such conclusions with doubt."

Manimekalai was a Buddhist. The poet of the epic was an ardent Buddhist. Buddhists rejected the ideas of materialism of whatever variety they might be. Therefore, the materialist system is stated in the epic only to be repudiated. It is evidently a distorted version to suit the needs of Buddhist theology.

Now let us turn to the presentation of the materialist case by a Jaina text. The epic, *Neelakesi*, narrates the life of an imaginary character of the same name, the heroine of the story. She was a demon converted by a Jain *Tirthankara*. She meets the teachers of all systems of philosophy and religion (just as Manimekalai did) and listens to their views. This epic comes later than *Manimekalai* and is assigned to the range, fifth to ninth century AD. The arguments of Pisachaka, the materialist teacher, are summarised in a commentary by A Chakravarthy Nayanar thus:

We do not recognise the subtle distinctions of qualities and substances.

For us the ultimate realities are the five *Bhutas*. These are permanent and real. Fire, earth, water, air and space are the permanent elements of the universe. Out of these are evolved respectively eyes, nose, tongue, body and ears and with these five sense organs arise respectively colour, odour, taste, touch and sound. Just as intoxicating drink is obtained by a combination of five things, flour, jaggery etc., so also by the combination of these five elements are obtained intelligence, feelings of pleasure and pain, which characteristics increase with the increase of the five elements and disappear with the disintegration of the five elements.

When the five elements thus disintegrate, the qualities of intelligence and feeling completely disappear without leaving any residue. The fundamental realities in the world are those five elements and every activity must be traced to the efficacy of these. But clever fellows

with the gift of the gab go prattling about the existence of the *Jeeva* and their doctrine is accepted by the ignorant masses. Except sheer verbiage there is nothing corresponding to the word *Jeeva* in reality. There never was in existence in the past anything besides these five elements and in future also these will continue to exist. To postulate an entity besides these five is the result of ignorance as to the nature of ultimate reality; and the *Lokayata* teacher thus expounded his system.<sup>26</sup>

It is relevant here to consider the remarks of the old commentary on *Manimekalai* to bring out the differences in the presentation of *Bhutavada* in the two works, *Manimekalai* and *Neelakesi*. The *Bhutavadin* in *Manimekalai* states that there are two kinds of matter: lifeless matter and matter with life. He further states that life has the attribute of consciousness and body is devoid of that attribute: life originates from living matter and body from lifeless matter. *Lokayatas* do not classify matter into two types as the *Bhutavadin* in *Manimekalai* attempts to do. The *Bhutavadin* agrees with the *Lokayatas* over other fundamental categories. He mentions that there are schools of materialism differing slightly in non-essentials. In the presentation of materialism in *Neelakesi* the five elements combine directly to produce consciousness (knowledge, joy etc.), but the clusters of elements are not classified as lifeless and living.

It can be seen quite clearly that early materialist trends of thought were systematised later to answer the polemical attacks of Jainism and Buddhism. While systematisation proceeded apace, the materialists had to answer from their basic categories certain questions raised by the idealists: What is life? What is its relation to the body? How does man know the world? How can you explain consciousness from the standpoint of the five elements? What happens to life after death? Is there rebirth in this world and life in another world?

What were the answers of the materialists of Tamil Nadu to these questions? Unfortunately, no texts by materialist authors have come down to us. We have no means of knowing their views on all these questions directly from the exponents. It cannot be expected that one's opponent will present one's views objectively when the aim is to demolish them. Debi Prasad Chattopadhyaya points out the difficulties in reconstructing ancient materialism from the statements of the opponents of this system thus:

But what are the sources of our information about this materialist philosophy? Unfortunately only the writings of those who sought to refute and ridicule it. In other words, *Lokayata* is preserved for us only in the form of *Purvapaksha*, that is as represented by its opponents. Not that there never existed any actual treatises on this system. Tucci, Garve and Das Gupta have produced conclusive evidence to show that actual *Lokayata* texts were known in ancient and early medieval times.<sup>27</sup>

On the whole, these sources which are meant to repudiate materialism are valuable as they are the main sources from which we learn some-

thing of a system of Indian thought which is more ancient than any other. All sources of idealist thought agree in stating the fundamental categories of ancient Indian materialism : (1) Worldly life was real. (2) Life arose out of a material basis. (3) This material basis consisted of five elements (or four). (4) The peculiar modes of combination brought forth various forms of existence. (5) Consciousness and life are one and the same and can be traced to the five elements. (6) Reality can be known by *Pratyaksha* or direct observation. (7) The origin of knowledge is observation and inference based on observation.

On the last point there is a degree of controversy. Did the ancient materialists believe in inference at all? Or did they postulate direct observation alone as a means to knowledge?

*Manimekalai* enumerates the different systems of philosophy expounded by their different teachers and appends a note on the forms of reasoning accepted by them as leading to valid inferences. "*Lokayatas* accept only *Pratyaksha* (direct observation)." This statement is by a *Mimamsaka* philosopher who figures as a character in the epic to expound the principles of logic to Manimekalai. The old commentator notes that so far as *Lokayata* is concerned, many other logicians like Varadaraya, the author of *Tharkika Rakcha*, agree with this view, although they differ with regard to other systems.<sup>28</sup>

Can it be true that our ancient materialists accepted only observation based on sense perceptions as the source of knowledge? Did they reject the validity of deductive and inductive forms of reasoning?

From the quotations given by opponents of this system from texts supposed to have been composed by materialists, it is clear that they used both deductive and inductive forms of reasoning, but opposed fallacious inductive forms of reasoning pressed into service to prove the existence of the soul apart from the body, or the theory that there is another birth in which man will enjoy the fruits of his actions in this birth.

Dakshin Narayan Sastry throws light on how *Lokayatas* used inferential reasoning and the inductive form of reasoning and what limits they set to the validity of the two forms: "Inference is classified into two types (by *Lokayatas*). One refers to the future and the other to the past. They rejected the first and accepted the second."<sup>29</sup>

This cryptic statement can be understood by referring to Das Gupta who describes the views of Purandara, a *Lokayata* who flourished in the seventh century A D.

Purandara admits the usefulness of inference, in determining the nature of all worldly things where perceptual experience is available, but inference cannot be employed for establishing any dogma regarding the transcendental world, or life after death, or the law of Karma which cannot be available to ordinary perceptual experience.<sup>30</sup>

The inferential process should be related to material life. It should not be used to justify dogmas about the future life. Das Gupta explains Purandara's point on the basis of the comments of the Jain author,

Vasudeva Suri:

The main reason for upholding such a distinction between the validity of inference in our practical life of ordinary experience and in ascertaining transcending truths beyond experience lies in this, that an inductive generalisation is made by observing a large measure of cases of agreement in presence together with agreement in absence and no case of agreement in presence can be observed in the transcendent sphere for even if such spheres existed they could not be perceived by the senses. Thus since in the supposed suprasensuous transcendent world no case of *hetu* agreeing with the presence of its *sadya*s can be observed, no inductive generalisation or law of concomitance can be made relating to this sphere. Hence the *Lokayatas* maintained that there were two types of inference: (1) *Utpanna pratiti* and (2) *Utpadya pratiti*. The former meant inference about something the knowledge of which already existed, and the latter meant inference about something the knowledge of which did not exist.<sup>31</sup>

The inference of god, the next world, happiness in heaven, the result of *Yagnas* (sacrifices) were inferences of the second type. *Lokayatas* would not deny the inference of fire from the observation of smoke.

The later works of idealist systems have caricatured and distorted the real intent of *Lokayata*. Thus the works of *Saiva Siddhanta* portray a *Lokayata* as a comical hedonist who indulges himself in licentious and unfettered enjoyment of all forbidden carnal pleasures. In the *Sivagnana Didhdhiar*, text of *Saiva Siddhanta*, the following picture of a *Lokayata* is sketched:

He wore fresh odorous garlands on his chest. He spoke thus: air, earth, water, fire are the elements which combine to produce smell, taste, shape and tactile sense. The combination of these again are everlasting. Obey the king and amass wealth and enjoy yourself here on earth.<sup>32</sup>

This is nothing but pure slander.

The study of materialism from South Indian sources can be a fruitful field of research, provided highly competent scholars turn their attention to the subject. Joseph Needham<sup>33</sup> mentions that the thoughts of the early *Siddhas* of Tamil Nadu bore the imprint of materialism. Reading the texts of the poems of *Siddhas* in their present form, I found that a very large number of them are interpolations of *Saiva Siddhanthis*. A few poems dealing with the anthropomorphic origin of the world, the description of the properties of the five elements, the identification of soul with the body and the desire to prolong life in this world by *Tantric* practices deserve the attention of scholars. A few medical treatises coming down to us from the ninth century and supposed to have been written by *Siddhas* deal with proto-physiology and proto-science from a materialistic point of view. All these works abound in a good deal of idealistic chaff.

If these are sorted out and studied critically, fresh light would be thrown on the study of Indian materialism.

- 1 A C Nayanar (Ed.) *Neelakesi*, a Jain epic, Madras 1936, Introduction.
- 2 *Purananuru*, an anthology of poems of the *Sangam* period. Various editions are available, for example, one edited by V Swaminatha Iyer, Madras 1965.
- 3 S V Pillai, *History of Tamil Language and Literature*, Madras 1960.
- 4 D Chattopadhyaya, *Lokayata*, Bombay 1958.
- 5 F Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, Moscow.
- 6 K Marx and F Engels, *German Ideology*, Moscow.
- 7 *Purananuru*, poem 239.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 191.
- 9 T N Subramanian, "Ajivikas in Thevaram" an article in the *Anunagiri Souvenir*, Isaikazhagam.
- 10 *Purananuru*, 9.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 *Ibid.*, 55. *Yavanas* are foreign merchants who are mentioned in all the *Puram* works.
- 14 D N Sastry, *Philosophical Background of Ayurveda*, chapter on *Lokayata*, Lokmipathi, (Ed.) 1936.
- 15 *Purananuru*.
- 16 *Mathuraikkanaḷi*, lines 453-458.
- 17 D N Sastry, *op. cit.*
- 18 *Purananuru*, 9.
- 19 *Pattupattu*, Madras 1958, a *Sangam* anthology of ten poems of which *Maduraikanchi* is one.
- 20 *Purananuru*, 18.
- 21 *Manimekalai*, M V Nathan and A V Pillai (Ed.) *Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society*, Tirunelveli, first edition 1946, X 90.
- 22 *Purananuru*, 189.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 167.
- 24 I V Mahadevan, *Study of Tamil Brahmin Inscriptions of the Sangam Age*, a paper submitted to the Second International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies.
- 25 Paraphrase of the lines in *Manimekalai* by the old commentator (Translation mine).
- 26 A C Nayanar, (Ed.) *Neelakesi*, Madras 1936, English introduction.
- 27 D Chattopadhyaya, *Indian Philosophy*, Bombay 1961, p 186.
- 28 *Manimekalai*, commentary on lines about *Bhutavada*.
- 29 D N Sastry, *op. cit.*
- 30 D Chattopadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p 189.
- 31 *Ibid.*, pp 189-190.
- 32 *Sivagnana Siddhiar* (Tamil) *Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society*, Tirunelveli (year not mentioned).
- 33 J Needham, *Development of Early Civilisation in China*, Cambridge, 1948. A few *Siddhas* believed that the body made of *Bhūtas* can be preserved if the changes in the combination and decomposition of the *Bhūtas* are controlled. A few *Siddhas* were merely rebels against organised *Saiva* religion—against caste oppression—but were theists believing in a supreme god, Siva, who could be approached without the intermediary of priesthood. They were not materialists. Later the Saivites interpolated many of their own concepts into the popular folk cults of the *Siddhas*. The extant work, known as *Siddhar Padalgal*, is a heterogeneous mixture of all these trends. No edition is free from interpolations. A deep study of this work and of the medical works of *Siddha* physicians may reveal materialist elements in their thought.

SHARAD PATIL

*Some Aspects of Matriarchy in Ancient India:  
Clan Mother to Tribal Mother*

ACCORDING to some scholars, kula and gotra were but the synonyms of clan, the basic unit of the ancient Indian tribal society. The orthodox argument that gotra was an exclusively Brahminical institution, and only later adopted by the Kṣatriyas, has up to this time been countered by the contention that it smacked of Brahminical communalism. But, when it comes from such a distinguished and scientifically objective sociologist as Irawati Karve, one is bound to have second thoughts before dismissing it outright:

A great deal is written about whether the Kshatriyas had gotras or not. The above discussion makes it clear that the Kshatriyas did not possess gotras. The Kshatriyas adopted gotras in imitation of the Brahmin gotras in post-epic times but the adoption merely amounted to adding an appendage to the family name and was not functional as in the case of Brahmins. Buddha is supposed to be of Gautama gotra. His family was Ikshvaku. The Janakas were also a branch of the same family and ruled over what is at present known as the southern portion of Nepal, a region to which Buddha's family also belonged. The priest of the Janakas was supposed to be Shetananda, a Gautama, and that is why Buddha is called a Goutama. Many Kshatriyas are supposed to have adopted the gotra of their priests.<sup>1</sup>

But because she equates kula with phratry, a fruitful investigation into the origins and development of these two institutions, both forming the basic units of the ancient Indian society, is cut short:

Neither the *vamśa* nor the *kula* possesses the characteristics of a clan. *Vamśa* is a line of patrilineal descent. *Kula* is patri-kin based on locality. If a junior branch in a *kula* wandered away, established itself elsewhere and changed its name, marriage between it and the original *kula* could take place. The name of a clan is fixed. The *vamśa* and *kula* names on the other hand had no fixity. They were patronymics derived from the names of some famous ancestors and when a new hero arose he gave his own name to his descendants...

The *kula* may be called a phratry, a *gebruderschaft* which remained an exogamous unit as long as it was based on one locality....<sup>3</sup>

Thus according to her, both the institutions are identical in character, if not in origin, that is, both are patriarchal; but, there is no conclusive evidence to show that *kula* at any time meant phratry. In order to arrive at a correct distinction between *gotra* and *kula*, we will have to turn to ancient sources. These sources not only assert that the *Kṣatriyas* and *Vaiśyas* have no *gotra* of their own, but that they have to adopt the *gotra* of their *purohita* Brahmins:

... It appears from the Ait. Br ... that in the case of *kṣatriyas* the *pravara* of their *purohita* was employed in religious acts where *pravara* had to be recited. This leads to the inference that most *kṣatriyas* had forgotten their *gotras* and *pravara* by that time. The Śrauta sūtras allow an option to *kṣatriyas* (to kings according to Āśv.). 'They may employ the *pravara* of the *purohitas* or all *kṣatriyas* may employ the same *pravara* viz. *Mānava—Aila—Paurūravasa—iti.*' Medhātithi on Manu III.5 states that the distinctions of *gotras* and *pravaras* concern primarily *brāhmanas* alone and not *kṣatriyas* or *vaiśyas* and quotes Āśv. Śr.(I. 3) in support. The Mit. and other nibandhakāras rely on the first alternative mentioned in the sūtras and say that in marriages of *kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas* the *gotras* and *pravaras* of their *purohitas* should be considered, as they have no specific *gotras* of their own....<sup>4</sup>

The occasion of the ritual declaration of *gotras* arose for both the *Kṣatriyas* and *Vaiśyas* at the time of marriage ceremonies, while for a *Kṣatriya* it arose also at the time of his consecration to kingship. It is significant that the option allowed to *Kṣatriyas* contains a name which is starkly matrilineal. *Aila* means according to *Rāmāyaṇa* (ver. 89. 23-24), the son of *Ilā*, the queen of the *Bāhikas*, while *Mahābhārata* (I.75.18-19) declares that *Ilā* was both the mother and father of *Purūravas* (*Sā vai tasya abhavan mātā pitā ca eva iti naḥ śrutam.*)<sup>4</sup> Patrilineality in this optional *gotra* system commences only with *Purūravas*. Different kinds of marriage ceremonies were prescribed by the law-givers for the Brahmins and the rest of the two higher castes and resulted in different situations for the brides of both the sets of castes. *Baudhāyana* prescribes that the

following four marriage rites are lawful for the Brahmins: 1) Brāhma 2) Prājapatya, 3) Ārṣa, and 4) Daiva, the Āsura and Rākṣasa rites for the Kṣatriyas, and the Gāndharva and Paisāca rites respectively for the Vaiśyas and Śūdras.<sup>5</sup> The main division as far as the marriage rites are concerned, is between the Brahmins to whom belong the former four rites, and the rest of the castes to whom belong the latter four rites. The Nibandhakāras make a significant observation to the effect that a bride who is married according to any one of the former four rites, adopts the gotra of her husband, while a bride who is married according to any one of the latter four rites, remains in the gotra of her father:

The Smṛti passages that condemn cross-cousin marriages are explained in a peculiar manner by the Sm. C. and the Par. M. When a woman is married in one of the four forms, Brāhma & c. she passes into the gotra of her husband, becomes a sapinda to the husband's family and so she is severed from her father's family (as to gotra and sapinda relationship); but when a woman is married in the āsura, gāndharva and other forms, she does not pass over into the gotra of her husband, but remains in the gotra of the father and her sapinda relationship with her father and mother continues. Therefore the son of such a woman if he marries the daughter of his mother's brother, would be marrying a girl who is a sagotra and sapinda of his mother. The Sm. C. and the Par. M. and other works say that the smṛti texts forbidding marriages with maternal uncle's daughter refer to a person whose mother was married in the gāndharva, āsura and the other two forms, but not to a person whose mother was married in the brāhma and the three other approved forms....<sup>6</sup>

This explanation of the prohibition or permission of cross-cousin marriage inadvertently admits that the Brahmins who followed the gotra system were patriarchal, while the rest of the castes were matrilineal. The option allowed to the Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas not only proves that gotra system was totally foreign to them, but clearly suggests that they followed a matrilineal clan system; for it is ridiculous to suppose that the lower three castes were without any clan system. This is also proved by Pāṇini's rule IV. I. 147, which is explained by V S Agrawala as follows:

.... According to Pāṇini, one's designation after the gotra name of one's mother (gotra-*strī*) implied censure (IV. I. 147), because it was supposed that the mother's name would be adopted only in the event of the father's name being unknown (*kāśikā*, *Pitur-asainivijnāne mātṛa vyapadeśo, patyasya kutsā*)....<sup>7</sup>

But the explanation that to be known by the gotra of one's mother was derogatory is at variance with the metronymic by which Pāṇini himself was known:

.... Patañjali quotes a *kārikā* describing Pāṇini as *Dākṣīputra* (*Dākṣīputrasya Pāṇineḥ*, 1-75) after the name of his mother who was of the Dakṣa gotra. *Dākṣeya* also would be Pāṇini's metronymic.<sup>8</sup>

V S Agrawala thinks that the popular opinion turned in favour of

a person being called after his mother's gotra at the time of Patañjali (second century B C):

... But there seems to have been a change later on and Patañjali states that there is honour in being addressed by the mother's name, as Gārgimāta, Vātsimāta (Bhāṣya, VII. 3. 107; III.340 mātrīṇāni mātach putrārtham arhate).<sup>9</sup>

But the usage of considering it a sign of distinction to be called by one's mother's name or gotra goes back at least to the earliest Upaniṣadic times. All the teachers of the Vājasaneyi school recorded by Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (VI. 5. 4.) are known by their metonymics, and Śaṅkarācārya comments that predominance of woman gave rise to meritorious sons (Strī- prādhānyāt guṇavān putro bhavati).

Again, we find that the village and the tribe (saṅgha) to which Pāṇini belonged was named Dākṣi-kūla.<sup>10</sup> Kula according to Pāṇini VI. 2.129 means a village.<sup>11</sup> Kūla also means bank of a river. Nirukta (IX.26) pronounces kūla also as kula which means a clan. Pra-maganda, the king of the non-Aryan Kikatas, mentioned by the Rk III.53.14, is described by the Nirukta (VI.32) as 'atyanta—kusīdi—kulīnaḥ.' The epithet is incorrectly rendered by Yāska 'born in the family of great usurers.'<sup>12</sup> But, kusīdin according to Taittirīya Samhitā (III.3.8.3) originally meant worshipper of mother earth; for Yamī is invoked there as kusīdam or earth. Hence, 'atyanta—kusīdi—kulīnaḥ' should mean 'sprung from the most sacred earth-worshipping clan.' This rendering receives support from the meaning Tiru-vanchik-kulam, the capital of the ancient Chera (Kerala) kingdom, situated near modern Crāṅganūr. According to Padmanabha Menon, Tiru means prosperous and Vanchi was the name of the country (most probably named after the Kṣatriya tribe as laid down by the Pāṇinian rule IV.1.168). Kulam evidently refers to the residence of the ruling clan.<sup>13</sup>

Gotra, as already explained, literally meant a cowpen, thus having pastoral connotation. The law-giver Baudhāyana declares that the study of the Veda, the avocation of the Brahmins, and agriculture, the pursuit prescribed for the Vaiśyas, are incompatible with each other, and the Dharmaśāstras declare with one voice that the upper two castes should resort to agriculture only in extreme distress.<sup>14</sup>

Kula, on the contrary, had organic connection with agriculture and the magical technique of agriculture, tantrism. Nirukta (VI.22) gives the etymology of kula as follows: '...kula (family) is derived from (the root) kuṣ (to knead), it is kneaded'.<sup>15</sup>

Kūla is likened to kneaded or cultivated mass of earth. Nirukta (VI.26) explains the epithet of the river Vitastā as mahā—kūlā, meaning having mighty or high banks.<sup>16</sup> Kūla here is also pronounced as kula. Hence, the compound mahā-kula also should mean a river having great masses of cultivated earth. Patañjali commenting on Pāṇini VII 3.1, informs that rice was grown on the banks of the river Devikā (Devikā-kūlāḥ śālayaḥ). R. S Sharma observes:

On account of the comparative inadequacy of the artificial means of irrigation the chief hope of the peasants lay in the inundation of their land by the flooded rivers during the rainy season. Some indication of this is to be found in a grammatical illustration which informs us that the banks of the Devikā river were specially suitable for growing paddy crops.<sup>17</sup>

Commenting on Pāṇini I.1.24 Patañjali speaks of the canals that irrigated the rice fields as kulyās (Śālārthaṁ kulyāḥ praṇīyante)<sup>18</sup> Pāli has a significant term for canal, namely mātikā. Buddha speaks of fields blessed with canals, (khettaṁ mātikā-sampannaṁ hoti)...<sup>19</sup> The commentator Buddhaghosa defines mātikā as 'mother' (Mātikā'ti mātaro janetīyo'ti attho). Early Buddhist philosophy used it as a synonym for cause, mother of effect.<sup>20</sup>

Kulya also meant a winnowing basket and a measure of corn equal to 8 dronas or 16 maunds.<sup>21</sup>

Manu (VII.119) enjoins that a king should remunerate the services of the lords of ten and twentyfive villages with one and five kulas of land respectively. George Buhler gives the various conjectures of the commentators about the area of kula lands.

Kulam, '(as much land as suffices for one) family, is really a technical term which Medh. explains by ghaṇṭa, a term known in some districts.' Gov., Kull., Nar., and Ragh. state that it is the double of a 'middling plough', i.e. as much as can be cultivated with twelve oxen, while Nand. interprets it by 'the share of one cultivator'.<sup>22</sup>

V S Agrawal thinks that kula was equivalent to two plough lands: "...Manu refers to a measure of land called kula equivalent to two plough lands...same as dohalikā of land grants."<sup>23</sup>

R S Sharma agrees with S K Maity's conclusion that a kula was equal to fourteen acres.<sup>24</sup> Modern scholars are at one with the commentators of Manu in taking for granted that kula meant a (joint) family and that kula land was a (joint) family-holding. Even if we agree with this interpretation, it is ridiculous to suppose that a lord of ten villages was expected to be endowed and to be satisfied with just a paltry piece of fourteen acres.

Though Maity admits that the investigations of this problem by D C Sircar are the most thoroughgoing ones, unfortunately he rejects his finding in the matter. Maity summarises the finding of Sircar as follows:

In many parts of modern Bangal seedling rice is transplanted, and Kālidāsa's Raghuvamśa shows that this was the case in Gupta times. Hence Sircar assumes that the area of the kulyavāpa was that required for the transplantation of the seedling produced from one kulya of seed. In the district of Faridpur, not far from the place of origin of some of the most important Gupta copper-plates, one maund of rice is required to sow 3 *bighas*, while seedlings grown from this require 10 *bighas* for planting. Thus the seedlings from one kulya of

seed would require from 128 to 160 *bighas* of land for transplantation...<sup>25</sup>

A lord of ten villages was equivalent to a Desai or Deśamukha of medieval Maharashtra. They enjoyed lands called vatan in āms as Pātils of the village from which their clans hailed. The land used to be one Cāhūra in area.<sup>26</sup> Jadunath Sarkar states that one Cāhūra was equal to 120 bighas.<sup>27</sup> Thus, kula land must have been 120 to 160 bighas in area. This was the average area of irrigated land tilled by a clan.

The word kul-māsa occurs in Chāndogya Upaniṣad (I. 10. 2) in the context of a famine in the Kuru country by a hail-storm. Śaṅkarācārya explains it as (despised) pulse (kutsitān māśān). Kula-ttha or kuḷida, considered the meanest variety of pulse in Maharashtra, used to be partaken only during a famine, and in normal times formed the food of animals. Nirukta (I.4) gives the etymology of Kul - māśa in this context. ... Kul - māśaḥ (sour gruels) are so called because they are wasted away (sidanti) in families (kuleṣu)—...<sup>28</sup> But, there could be no 'families', in the Upaniṣadic times, there being as yet no private property in land. Hence, kul - māśa can only be rendered as the mean kind of pulse which went to rot in a clan.

Kula means a woman in Tantra, which is agricultural magic.<sup>29</sup> D Chattopadhyaya defines agricultural magic as follows:

Agricultural magic rests on the principle that the productivity of nature - of the female earth - can be induced or enhanced by the imitation or contagion of the human reproductive functions. Conversely, human fertility is viewed as dependent on natural fertility.<sup>30</sup>

Briffault has conclusively proved that agriculture everywhere in the world was the invention of women: "The art of cultivation has developed exclusively in the hands of women".<sup>31</sup> That is why the Vedic agricultural magical ritual called Sītā sacrifice was, according to Altekar, exclusively a woman's affair:

There were some sacrifices which could be offered by women alone down to C. 500 B. C. Sītā sacrifice, intended to promote a rich harvest, was one of them ... It is possible that the exclusive association of women with them ... was due to the theory that since they are intended to promote rich harvest and fertility, they should be performed by women alone, who are their visible symbols.<sup>32</sup>

Kauṭalya (II.40) enjoined that sowing should always be prefaced by the invocation of Sītā, the Vedic deity of agriculture.<sup>33</sup>

The Atharva-vedic hymn I.14 is supposed to be a magical incantation against a 'kula-pā' daughter (kanyā). Whitney translates kula-pā as house-keeper, while the same word in the Rk VII. 72.2 is rendered by him as the head of a family.<sup>34</sup> The generally accepted meaning of this term deduced from the former hymn and the Rgvedic hymns VIII. 80, X. 39, 40 is a spinster, or an unmarried woman constrained to keep the house of her father and grow old there. But, the literal meaning of the word is the

protector or ruler of a clan. The Atharva-vedic Ṛks 1.14.2 and 3 go as follows:

Eṣā te rājan kanyā vadhūr nirdhūyatām yama

Sā mātur badhyatām gṛhe' tho bhrātur atho pituḥ.

[O king (Soma), 'possessor' (yama) of this maiden, copulate with this bride (of yours). Let her be bound to the house of her mother, brother and father.]

Eṣā te kula-pā rājan tām u te pari dadmasi

Jyok pitṛṣuāsāta ā sirṣṇaḥ samopyat.

[She is the head of your clan, O king; we make her over to you. Let her stay long with her fathers, so that their heads (or lands) may be sown (with hairs or crops).]

That the head was likened to the kula land becomes clear by the invocation addressed to Indra by Apālā Ātreya also a kula-pā, in the Ṛk VIII. 91. 5: Imāni triṇi viṣṭayā tāni Indra virohaya

Śiras tātasya urvarām adidaṁ me upa-udare.

['O Indra, cause to sprout again three places, these which I declare My father's head, his cultured field, and this the part below my waist'.<sup>85</sup>

It means that the head of a kula was a woman, who as the priestess of the clan, performed agricultural magic in order to ensure and promote the fertility and productivity of the kula land. The law-givers knew kula-pā by the name brahma-vādinī:

... The Hārīta-dharmasūtra as quoted in the Sm. C. and other digests says 'there are two sorts of women, those that are brahmavādinis (i. e. students of sacred lore) and those that are sadyovadhūs (i. e. who straightaway marry). Out of these brahmavādinīs have to go through upanayana, keeping fire, vedic study and begging in one's house (i. e. under the parental roof)....<sup>86</sup>

The kula-pā turns into a despised and unchaste woman with the period of the compilation of the grammatical rules by Pāṇini. For, in his rule IV. 1.127, kula-ṭā means a loose woman. What caused her fall from her exalted position? Kāśikā answers that in wandering from clan to clan she loses her chastity (Yā tu kulāny aṭanti śīlani bhinatti -). But, the exalted past is not effaced entirely. Bhaṭṭeji comments that kulaṭā, a woman who moved from clan to clan, was also a saint, a nun (Sati bhikṣuky atra kula-ṭā)<sup>87</sup>. We have such a nun, though fixed to a particular kula, in the Buddhist monastic order. A Buddhist nun who obtained her quota of alms only from one clan and had no need to resort to several clans, was called a kulūpikā. The nun Thullanandā was one of them (Tena kho pana samayena Thulla-nandā bhikkhuni aññatarasya kulassa kulūpikā hoti nicca-bhāttikā).<sup>88</sup>

The etymology of kulaṭā as given by Kāśikā is kulāny aṭati iti kula-ṭā, meaning a woman who roams from clan to clan. The formation of such a word itself denotes that a clan-mother has been transformed into a phratry-mother

One of the favourite similiae of Buddha was that of the tale of jana-

pada-kalyāṇi.<sup>39</sup> We can gather from this account that great crowds used to gather when a janapada-kalyāṇi gave a public performance of dancing and singing (Sa kho panāsa janapada-kalyāṇi parama-pāsāvinī nacce, parama-pāsāvinī gite, janapada-kalyāṇi naccoti gāyati'ti kho, bhikkhave, bhiyyosomattāya mahājanakāya sannipateyya)<sup>40</sup>. Rhys Davis translates the term as 'the most beautiful woman in the land'<sup>41</sup>. Rahul Sankrityayana renders the term as 'the beauty queen of a country'<sup>42</sup>, while Jagdish Kashyap and Dharmarakshita take it in the sense of a prostitute.<sup>43</sup> But the word literally means 'the cause of the prosperity of a jana-pada.'

The compound jana-pada, in the strict sense of the term, means the country of a phratry (jana). Jana-pada-kalyāṇi belonged not to a tribe, but to a phratry (jāti) of it. Buddha, to prove the falsity of the Brahminic conception of union with Brahma, resorted to the simile of jana-pada-kalyāṇi, in his discussion with the Brahmin Vāseṭṭha:

Just, Vāseṭṭha, as if a man would say, 'How I long for, how I love the most beautiful woman in this land!'

And people would ask him, 'Well ! good friend! this most beautiful woman in the land whom you thus love and long for, do you know whether that beautiful woman is a noble lady (Khattiyī) or a Brāhman woman (Brāhmaṇī), or of the trader class (Vessī), or a Sūdra (Suddī)?'

And when so asked he should answer 'No'.

And when people should ask him, 'Well ! good friend ! this most beautiful woman in all the land, whom you so love and long for, do you know what the name of that most beautiful woman is, or what is her family name (evaṃ gottā), whether she be tall or short, dark or of medium complexion, black or fair, or in what village or town or city she dwells?'

But when so asked he should answer 'No.'<sup>44</sup>

Pāṇini's rule IV. 1.168 states that a country receives its name from the name of the Kṣatriyas who reside in it. Though the Kṣatriyas lived in tribes or tribal confederations, they were but a jāti or phratry in their respective saṃgha gaṇas. It has already been proved that they belonged to the matriarchal or matrilineal kula system. Hence, it was the female founder of that phratry of a tribe that gave her name to that tribe. Pāṇini's tribe is a case in point:

The Dākṣas are referred to as a clan organised into Saṃgha as is apparent from the following examples in Kāśīkā: Dakṣaḥ saṃghaḥ, Dākṣaḥ arikaḥ, Dākṣani lakṣanaṃ (IV.3.127).<sup>45</sup>

Rk X.86.23 chants that a woman called Parśu gave birth to twenty offspring (Parśuḥ nāma mānavi sākam sasūva viniśatim). Pāṇini's rule V.3.117 states that Parśu was the name of a janapada and Parśava the designation of the Kṣatriyas who resided in it. The same rule goes to say that the Yāudheya tribe and its janapada came to be known after the tribal mother, Yāudh. It has already been mentioned that the five phratries of the so-called tribe of gods were founded by janis, and that

the Śalva and Madra phātries were sprung from Bhadrā Kākṣivati. Examples can be multiplied.

In the Atharva-vedic Ṛk invoking Aditi (VII.6.1) who as we have seen was a phratry-mother in the Pāñcājana tribe of gods, is addressed as the mother of all the five phratrics and the whole universe:

Aditir dyaur Aditir antarikṣam Aditir-mātā ca sa pitā sa putrah Viśve-deva Aditiḥ pañca jana Aditir jātam Aditir jani tvam.

[Aditi (is) heaven, Aditi atmosphere, Aditi mother, she father, she son; (the phratry of) Viśve-devas (is) Aditi, the five phratrics Aditi; Aditi is what is born; O phratry-mother (jani), you (have become the mother of the whole universe).]

Here we have a clear example of a phratry-mother in course of time being transformed into a tribal mother as well as the mother of the whole universe like Prakṛti.

We meet the human tribal mother in the person of a gaṇikā. Yaśodhara in Kāma-sūtra IX:5.28 defines gaṇika as the highest kind of prostitute (Trividhā veśyā—gaṇikā rūpā-ājīvā, kumbhadāsi ca. Tāḥ pratyekam uttama-madhyama-adhama-bhedāt trividhāḥ). One of the earliest known and the most celebrated was Amba-pāṭi of the Vajji tribal confederation.

According to the Kalpā-sūtra of the Jainas, the Licchavi (Vajji) tribe was composed of nine phratrics, and it formed a tribal confederation called Kāśi-Kosala by forming a league with the Mallaki tribe which similarly consisted of nine phratrics (... nava Mallaḥ nava Lecchāḥ Kāśi-Kosalag ātṭharasavi gaṇarāyāṇo...)<sup>47</sup> Ancient Indian literature is not very strict and precise in using the terms denoting the various constituents of tribal society. The meaning of a particular term has to be understood only in its context. The Mallas were a separate tribe in the times of Mahāvira and Buddha, and hence the term gaṇa here has to be taken in the sense of a phratry and not tribe. Rahul Sankrityayana thinks that the Vajji tribe (gaṇa) consisted of eight janas in which the Videhas and the Licchavis were the most prominent.<sup>48</sup> BN Puri, on the basis of the information provided by the grammatical literature, states:

Vṛji in earlier times formed a janapada consisting of the Licchavis of Vaiśālī and the Janakas of Videha [VI.2.42] corresponding to modern Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga districts in North Bihar. Padmañjali mentions them separately. The Vṛjis, like the Kurus, had the government of a family (Kuru gārhapatam; Vṛji gārhapatam), but the Videhas are mentioned in the list of Kṣatriyas.<sup>49</sup>

Rāmāyaṇa explicitly states that the country bordering on Videha and situated on the northern banks of the river Ganges was ruled by Vaiśalika kings (I.45-47). Thus, the Videhas and Vaiśālikas were separate and independent kingdoms in the days of Rāmāyaṇa. Ajātasattu, king of Magadha, and a junior contemporary of Buddha, is described by Dīghanikāya as declaring his determination to destroy the Vajjis or Vṛjis.<sup>49</sup> When Mahānāma saw a multitude of fierce and uncontrollable (caṇḍā, pharusā) Licchav youths standing in all humility before

Buddha in the Mahāvana of Vaiśālī, he exclaimed—"Vajjis will be (victorious), Vajjis will be (victorious)!"<sup>50</sup> Hence, Vajji or Vṛji was the name of the jana-pada as well as of the tribal confederation of the Videhas and the Licchavis.

Apte's Sanskrit-English dictionary has failed to take cognizance of the word Vṛji. Kosambi identifies Vajji with Licchavi, and interprets the term as pastoral nomads settled down to agriculture.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, it is an admitted fact that the Licchavis and Mallas both belonged to the non-Vedic fold.<sup>53</sup> Vajji might have been derived from Vajja, one of the several varieties of playing with dice mentioned by Vinaya-piṭaka.<sup>54</sup> Being an agricultural society, it is not impossible for the Vajji confederation to have been named after a phratry-mother of the same name.

It was a popular belief that the office of gaṇikā was the cause of the prosperity of Vaiśālī, the capital of the Vajji confederation:

Now a merchant from Rājagaha went to Vesālī on a certain business. That Rājagaha merchant saw what an opulent, prosperous town Vesālī was, how prosperous, crowded with people, and abundant with food, and the seven thousand seven hundred and seven storeyed buildings and seven thousand seven hundred and seven pinnacled buildings, and seven thousand seven hundred and seven pleasure grounds (ārāmas), and seven thousand seven hundred and seven lotus-ponds, and the courtesan Ambapālī, who was beautiful, graceful, pleasant, gifted with the highest beauty of complexion, well versed in dancing, singing and lute-playing, much visited by desirous people, and through whom Vesālī became more and more flourishing. And the Rājagaha merchant, after having done his business in Vesālī, returned to Rājagaha and went to the place where the Magadha king Seniya Bimbisāra was. Having approached him, he said to the Magadha king Seniya Bimbisāra: 'Vesālī, Your Majesty, is an opulent, prosperous town...Through that person Vesālī becomes more and more flourishing. May it please Your Majesty, let us also instal a courtesan.

(The king replied), 'Well, my good Sir, look for such a girl whom you can instal as courtesan.'<sup>55</sup>

The custom of the kula-ṭā roaming from clan to clan was observed by Ambapālī. The account says that she did not receive her customers at her dwelling, but she went to the persons who paid her fifty kārṣāpaṇas for one night (...abhisatam atthikānam atthikānam manussam paññasāya carattim gacchantim...)<sup>56</sup> Here manussa should not be taken in the sense of an individual or member of a family; for though the grammarian Patañjali, as already mentioned, recorded that the Vījis had 'a government of a family', gṛha-pati, though literally meaning the head of a house, as yet was far from having the sense of the head of a family. The gṛha-pati of the Vedic literature is explained by Kosambi as follows:

...The term gṛhapati—householder—does occur, with a special gārhapataya fire. In the TS it cannot refer to a small householder for whom the onerous sacrifices described would be impossible, hence must

indicate the head of a clan or large household of some sort which might include a dozen or more families in the modern sense. Thus TS. 2.2.1: 'He should make an offering to Indra and Agni on eleven potoherds who has a dispute about a field or with his neighbours,' has to be interpreted in the context not as evidence for the private ownership of land, but for disputes beginning to arise between neighbouring groups which could not be settled within the framework of a single tribe, by meeting in assembly, hence must have been between different tribal units on adjacent territory. The 'he' would mean chief of the unit, whatever the size may have been. Thereafter, large households remained the norm among the upper classes, down to feudal times and later...<sup>57</sup>

A differentiation should be made here to the effect that the characteristic of feudal society is large joint families and not clans. A small clan may be smaller than a big joint family, but a small clan would nevertheless contain, as already shown, collateral relations of all the given seven generations. There were no *gṛha-patis*, in the sense of family-heads, in the tribal states like the Vajji, except the merchants, who were not members of these tribal states.<sup>58</sup> The basic unit of tribes like the Vajjis was still a clan and not a joint family. When Buddha preached to the Licchavi youths the five rules (*kula-puttassa pañcadhammā*) that were to be observed by the clan members of the Vajjis, he enumerated the following careers that were open to every clan member: 1) Consecrated Kṣatriya king, 2) Rāṣṭrika, 3) Pettanika (hereditary office), 4) army commander, 5) head of a clan, 6) head of a guild and 7) head of a phratry.<sup>59</sup> Vaḍḍha Licchavi came to tender his apologies to Buddha accompanied by his sons and wife, friends and co-elders of the tribe, phratry and clan brothers (Atha kho Vaḍḍho Licchavi-sa-putta-dāro sa-mitta-amacco, sa-ñāti-sālohitto alla-vattho alla-keso yena Bhagavā tena upasaṅkami....)<sup>60</sup> The 7,777 palatial buildings of Vesālī, containing parks and lotus-ponds though the figure is evidently exaggerated as noted by Chanana<sup>61</sup>—can favourably bear comparison with the *ṭaṭavād* clan houses of the matrilineal Nairs of Kerala, a faithful description of which has been left to us by Ehrenfels.<sup>62</sup>

Hence, Ambapālī visited not heads of families, but heads of clans. If the prosperity of Vesālī was due to a *gaṇikā* Ambapālī, conversely, its doom was also in the hands of a *gaṇikā*. Bimbisārāś's son Ajātasattu, failing to destroy the Vajjis in open wars, utilised the services of a *gaṇika*: Later on, Kūṇika is said to have brought the courtesan, Māgahiyā, and the ascetic Kūlavālaya together, which brought about the fall of the city Vesālī. No sooner this was done, than Kūṇika entered the city and destroyed it....<sup>63</sup>

Another account of Amba-pālī narrated by Vinaya-piṭaka and Digha-nikāya<sup>64</sup> provides us with a clue as to the cause of the sacredness of her office. When Amba-pālī heard that Buddha had arrived in Koṭigama near Vesālī, she rode out with her magnificent retinue to see him and

invited him with his fraternity of Bhikkhus to their morrow's meal at her dwelling. On her way back she met the Licchavis driving on their chariots to meet Buddha. To spite the Licchavis:

...The courtesan Ambapālī drove up against the young Licchavis, pole to pole, yoke to yoke, wheel to wheel, axle to axle. And those Licchavis said to the courtesan Ambapālī: 'How is it, Ambapālī, that you drive up against the young Licchavis, pole to pole, & c...'

'My Lords, I have just invited the Blessed One with the fraternity of Bhikkhus for their morrow's meal.'

'Ambapālī! give up this meal to us for a hundred thousand.'

'My Lords, were you to offer all Vesālī with its subject territory, I would not give up this meal.'

Then the Licchavis snapped their fingers (exclaiming), 'We are outdone by this woman (ambakāyā)! We are outreached by this woman!'<sup>65</sup>

The Pāli text uses the word 'ambakāyā' which is rendered by Rhys Davids as 'woman', which he explains in a footnote thus.

Ambakāyā, which Buddhaghosa explains by itthikāya, comp. the well-known Mantra, Vājasaneyi Saṁhita 23. 18: Ambe Ambike Ambā-like. & c. Probably the word ambakā is a contemptuous form intended here at the same time to convey an allusion to the mango (amba) gardens which Ambapālī possessed, and from which she was named.<sup>66</sup>

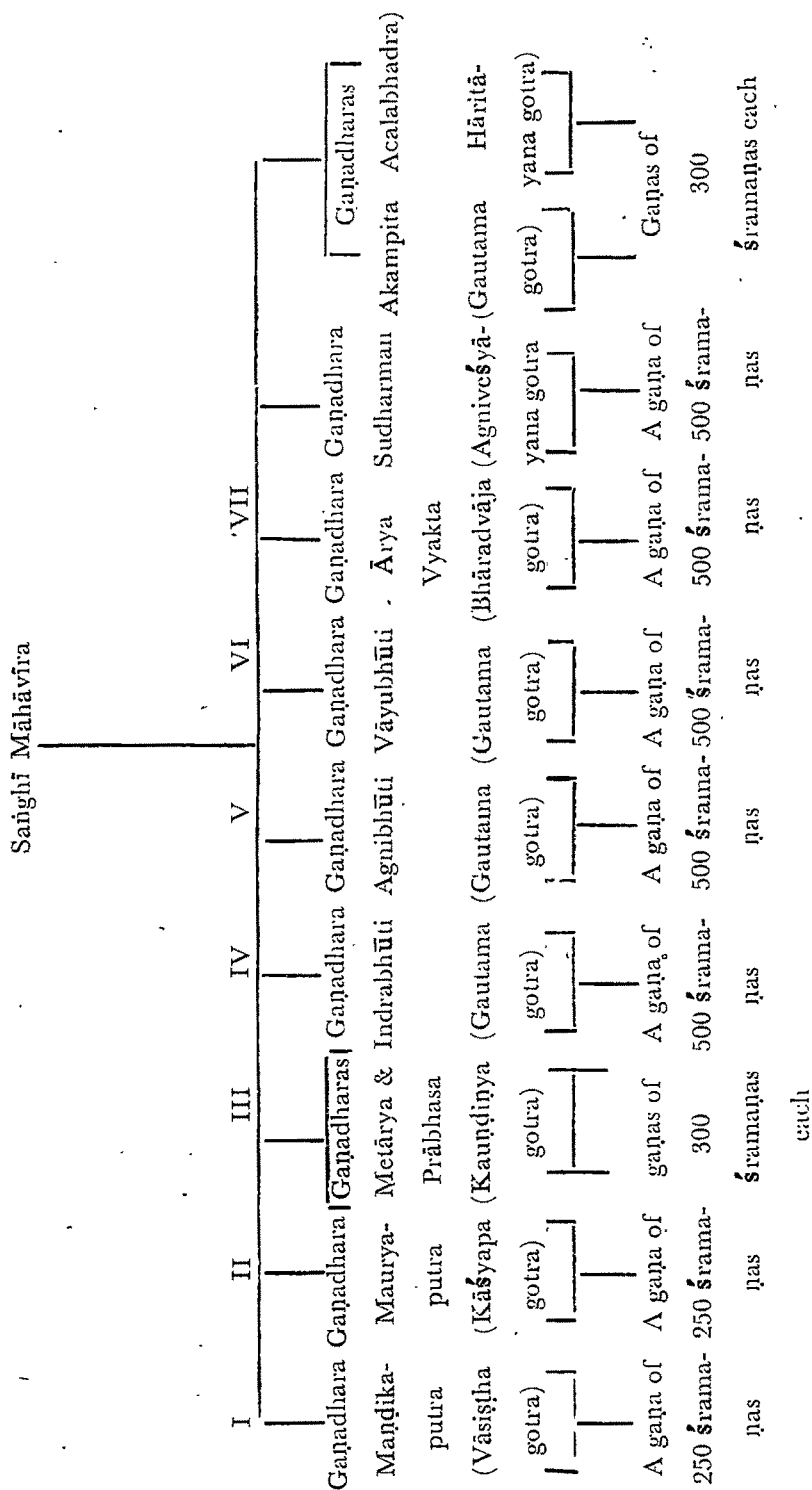
Two things strike the eye:

1) Amba-pālī owned the sacred mango-grove, which she presented to Buddha's monastic order. When no individual property in land had as yet developed in the Vajji saṅgha-gaṇa, the gaṇikā owned a big grove which she could dispose of without even consulting the haughty republican Vajjis. It should be noted that every city or village in those days possessed its own sacred grove. Ahalyā, whose son Śatananda was the purohita of King Janaka of the Videhas (the foster father of Sītā), lived in a sacred grove near Mithilā (Mithilā-upavane tatra āśramam dṛśya Raghavaḥ. I.48.11).

2) Amba-pālī is addressed by the Licchavis as Ambakā, which is a synonym of ambā, meaning mother. Had she really been a courtesan whose body was at the service of the oligarchic Licchavis, they would in no case have addressed her even in jest or contempt as 'mother'!

The conclusion is inescapable. Amba-pālī was really the tribal mother of the Vajjis, and her name was the designation of the high priestess of the Vajji tribe, literally meaning 'priestess of the mother' (goddess).

The word gaṇikā itself originally must have meant the ruler of a gaṇa. For the teachers of the religious sects in Buddha's time are mentioned by both the Buddhist and Jaina canons as gaṇins, gaṇadharas, gaṇa-ācariyas and saṅghīs, meaning literally, heads of their religious tribes.<sup>67</sup> It is well known that Buddha's saṅgha was modelled after and administered on tribal model.<sup>68</sup> Mahāvīra's Jaina monastic order was

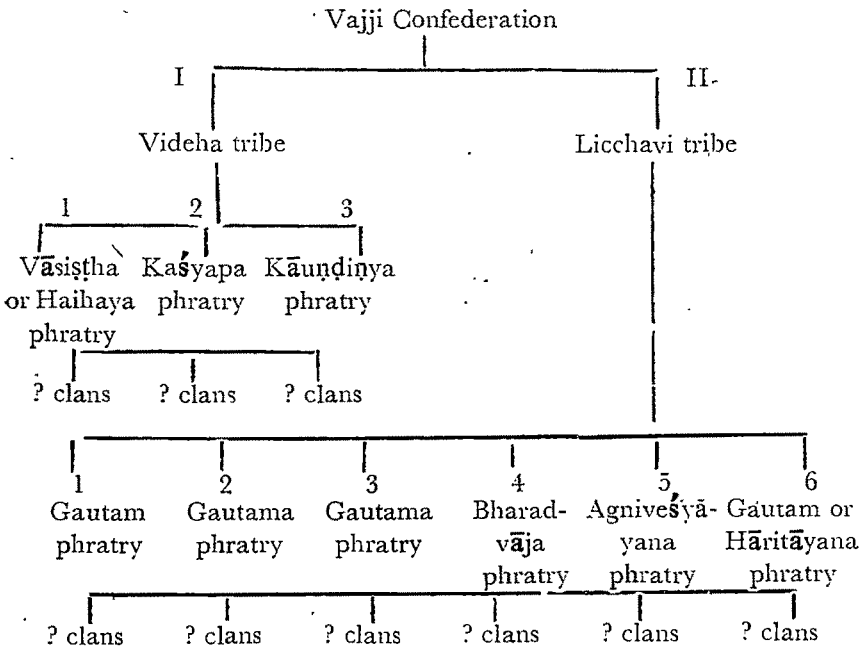


a faithful replica of the Vajji confederation. Mahāvīra was the son of a phratriarch of the Videha tribe; hence he was called a *ṇāya* (Sanskrit *jñātṛ*), son of a phratriarch (*ṇāya-putta*), moon of the Kāśyapa kula of the phratry (*ṇāya-kula-canda*, *ṇāya-kula-nivvatta*), a Videha, a son of the Videha tribe (Videha-dinna, Videha-jacca, Videha-sūmāla).<sup>60</sup> King Ajātasattu of Magadha, also a Videhi-putta, was informed by one of his ministers, that Mahāvīra, the naked one, the son of a phratriarch, was the head and teacher of a religious tribe ("Ayaṃ, Deva, nigaṇṭho, nāṭaputto, saṅghi ceva, gaṇi ca, gaṇa-ācariyoca").<sup>70</sup>

Uttarādhyaṇa prescribes ten kinds of services to the Jaina monks: There are ten kinds of service,...as serving the Ācārya, Upādhyāya, Sthavira, Tapasvin, Glana, Saikṣya, Śādharmika, Kula, Gaṇa and Saṅgha.<sup>71</sup>

These kula, gaṇa and saṅgha were neither the constituents of a tribe nor the tribe itself, but the constituents or appellations of the Jaina monastic order. Mahāvīra's Jaina monastic order can be reduced to a diagram as on page 54.

This monastic tribe developed gaṇas with kulas and śākhās after the gaṇi Ārya Suhastin.<sup>72</sup> Now Mahāvīra's maternal uncle Ceḍaga, a Videha, and the king of the Vajjis, was of Vāsiṣṭha gotra. It was a law of ancient tribal society that only the head of a phratry could become a king; hence, Ceḍaga must have headed the Vāsiṣṭha or Haihaya phratry. Mahāvīra himself being the son of a jñātṛ of the Kāśyapa phratry, it is but in the nature of things that he should have been married to the daughter of another phratriarch. His wife Yaśoda belonged to the Kaunḍiṇya gotra.<sup>73</sup> The gaṇa-dharas Maṇḍika-putra and Maurya-putra



belonged respectively to the Vaṣiṣṭha and Kaśyapa gotras, and the gaṇadharas Metārya and Prabhāsa both belonged to the Kaunḍīnya gotra. If we deduct these four gaṇadharas of the three gaṇas evidently modelled after the Videha phratries, the remaining six gaṇas must have been the replicas of the Licchavi phratries. Shorn of all religious verbiage, the Vajji confederation must have been as presented in the diagram on page 55.

Of such a great, opulent and powerful confederation Ambapālī was the tribal mother. But, it is because of this 'greatness' of the confederation, that the office of gaṇikā had already been transformed from a tribal mother into the highest class of prostitutes. That is why the most beautiful and wealthy, most sacred and free woman amongst the Vajjis renounced the world and ended her meteoric career as a Buddhist nun, leaving for posterity one of the most remarkable songs of the Therīgatha (XIII. 1.).

Mādhavī, one of the main characters of the Tamil epic 'Silappadikāram,' the gaṇikā of Puhar, the capital of the Chola kingdom, was born to a divine couple.

Agastya, the famous sage who dwells on the sacred mount Podigil, had once cursed the son of the god Indra and the nymph Urvasi for their unseemly behaviour. But Urvasi was forgiven when she displayed her exquisite art on the stage. It was to this noble and adventurous pair that a beautiful girl named Madhavi was born...<sup>74</sup>

She also ended her days as a Buddhist nun.

In feudal monarchies this once ruler of a tribe not only loses all the formal sacredness still ascribed to her in the saṅgha-gaṇas, but is converted into a *de facto de jure* 'state slave':

...it is clear that a girl, on whom the state invested a thousand pieces of money and who was then given training in fine arts at state expense (her teachers being maintained by the state), was under the complete control of the state, with regard to her earnings, her possessions, etc. The provision of 24 times the money spent on her, as her release-money, also seriously limited her liberty and brought her near a slave, though she could not be put to all sorts of work. Moreover, unlike the slave, she was never under one master. The provision for employing an old *ganika* in the king's service, also shows that if she failed to come by a rescuer, willing to purchase her liberty for 24,000 pieces of money, she was treated like any other woman-slave of the king. The provision of different sums of money for release of her relations (brother, etc.), strengthens this opinion.<sup>75</sup>

That is why Vasantāsenā, the gaṇikā of Ujjayinī says to her female slave Madanikā in anguish, 'Jai mama sac-chando, tadā vinā atthaṃ sabbaṃ pariṇaṃ a-bhujissaṃ karaissaṃ (Had I been free, I would have manumitted the whole of my slave retinue).'<sup>76</sup>

This tragic transmutation of the tribal mother into a courtesan gaṇikā is best represented by the Sāṅkhya Prakṛti, the cosmic mother

turning herself into a dancing girl for beguiling the Puruṣa, or the individual soul:

Raṅgasya darśayitvā nivartate nartaki yathā nṛtyāt  
Puruṣasya tathā' tmānaṁ prakāśya vinivartate Prakṛti.<sup>7a</sup>

(As a dancing girl, having exhibited herself to the spectators of the stage, ceases to dance, so does Nature, cease to operate when she has made herself manifest to the Spirit.)

[ This article, like "Problem of Slavery in Ancient India" (Social Scientist, June 1973) is a selected chapter from Sharad Patil's voluminous research, Studies on the Origins of Indian Slavery and Feudalism and Their Philosophies. As the author states at the end of the first chapter, his book "attempts to trace the origin and development of Indian slavery, up to the period when it was finally displaced by feudalism, by making a comparative study of the two currents, Brahminical and non-Brahminical. As Sāṅkhya-kārikā (52) says :

...dvi-vidhaḥ pravartate sargaḥ  
(...evolution is two-fold).

—EDITOR ]

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- 5 *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol XIV, pp 205-207.
- 6 P V Kane, *op. cit.*, p 463.
- 7 V S Agrawala, *India as Known to Panini*, p 189.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p 8.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p 189.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp 8-9.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p 64.
- 12 L Sarup, *Nighantu and Nirukta*, p 111.
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- 16 *Ibid.*, p 147.
- 17 R S Sharma, *Light on Early Indian Society and Economy*, p 99.
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- 113 J C Jain, *Life in Ancient India as Depicted in the Jain Canons*, p 383.
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- 115 *Ibid.*, Vol XVII, pp 106-107.
- 116 *Ibid.*
- 117 J Kashyap (Ed.), *Digha-nikaya-pali, Silakkhandha-vagga*, II.1.2-7; *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol XXII, pp 113, 273, 278, 284, 286 ff.
- 118 K P Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*, pp 42-44, D Chattopadhyaya, *Lokayata*, pp 459 ff.
- 119 *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol XXII p 194.
- 120 J Kashyap (Ed.), *Digha-nikaya-pali, Silakkhandha-vagga*, II.1.7.
- 121 *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol XLV, p 179.
- 122 *Ibid.*, Vol XXII, pp.290-293.
- 123 *Ibid.*, p 193.
- 124 Alain Danielou, "Silappadikaram" (English translation) *Illustrated Weekly, of India* September, 27, 1964.
- 125 D R Chanana, *op. cit.*, pp 100-101.
- 126 *Mrc-chakatika*, Act IV.

# COMMUNICATION

## *Joan Robinson and Marxism Today*

AFTER carefully reading Professor Joan Robinson's article in *Social Scientist* (March 1973) I am inclined to offer the following comments.

### *Theory of Value*

In Volume III of *Capital* in the chapter on the "Equalisation of the General Rate of Profit", Marx shows full awareness of the contradiction between his law of value and his law of the equalisation of the rate of profit per unit of capital. He says:

It is *prima facie* two entirely different matters whether commodities are sold at their values (i. e. exchanged in proportion to the value contained in them at prices corresponding to their value) or whether they are sold at such prices that their sale yields equal profits for equal masses of capitals advanced for their respective production... The whole difficulty arises from the fact that commodities are not exchanged simply as commodities but as products of capitals which claim participation in the total amount of surplus-value, proportional to their magnitude, or equal if they are of equal magnitude.<sup>1</sup>

Engels in his supplement to Volume III quotes Marx:

The exchange of commodities at their values or approximately at their values, thus requires a *much lower stage* than their exchange at their prices of production, which requires a definite level of capitalist development... Apart from the domination of prices and price movement by the law of value, it is quite appropriate to regard the values of commodities as not only *theoretically* but also *historically prius* to the prices of production. This applies to conditions in which the labourer owns his means of production....<sup>2</sup>

In the same Supplement Engels stated, "We are dealing here not only with a purely logical process, but with a historical process and its explanatory reflection in thought, the logical pursuance of its inner connections".<sup>3</sup>

Then follows a discussion by Engels about how the equalisation of

the rate of profit itself evolved in a historical process through trading practices in Venice, Genoa and Asia Minor. Earlier, Engels deals extensively with the problem of how the law of value holds good in a system in which the labourer owns his own means of production and how in such a situation the volume of profit *per worker* tends to be equal irrespective of differences in the values of capital employed by different workers.

According to Marx, irrespective of the factors determining prices of production,

The law of value dominates price movements with reductions or increases in required labour time making prices of production fall or rise. *It is in this sense* that Ricardo (who doubtlessly realised that his prices of production deviated from the value of commodities) says that "the inquiry to which I wish to draw the reader's attention relates to the effect of the variations in the relative value of commodities and not in their absolute value."<sup>4</sup> (emphasis added)

In dealing with this issue Marx clearly refers to relative prices and states that even where prices correspond to equal rate of profits, *relative prices* are still influenced and dominated by relative changes in values, that is to say, labour costs. I cannot see how objection can be taken to this statement in which there is no reference to absolute values at all. Are not relative prices influenced by changes in costs even when they yield equal rates of profit?

Joan Robinson unnecessarily accuses Marx of dogmatism which implies that after establishing the law of value in the opening chapters of Volume I (much before he starts elaborately analysing the features of capitalist production) Marx establishes the law of the equalisation of the rate of profit in Volume III without realising that the two laws contradict each other except in cases where the organic composition of capitals in certain industries coincides with the average composition for industry as a whole. This accusation is unfounded as the foregoing quotations abundantly clarify.

While expressing views on value and price Joan Robinson refers to a slip which Marx made when he tried to show the relation between values and prices of *particular* commodities. Marx, according to her, forgot that "the elements of constant capital required for the production of a commodity enter into the calculation in terms of their prices, not of their labour values"<sup>5</sup>. What precisely is the position in this case? Here is what Marx has to say in this connection in his chapter on the "Effect of Price Fluctuations".

But in general, it should be noted here, as in the previous case, that if variations take place, either due to savings in constant capital, or due to fluctuations in the price of raw materials, they always affect the rate of profit.<sup>6</sup>

In further elucidation of the effects of changes in the prices of the elements of constant capital, Marx says:

The value of raw and auxiliary materials passes entirely and all at

one time into the value of the product in the manufacture of which they are consumed, while the elements of fixed capital transfer their value to the product only gradually in proportion to their wear and tear. It follows that the price of the product is influenced far more by the price of raw materials than by that of fixed capital, although the rate of profit is determined by the total value of capital applied no matter how much of it is consumed in the making of the product. But it is evident—although we merely mention it in passing since *we still assume* that commodities are sold at their values, so that price fluctuations caused by competition do not as yet concern us—that the expansion or contraction of the market depends on the price of the individual commodity and is inversely proportional to the rise or fall of this price. It actually develops, therefore, that the price of the product does not rise in proportion to that of the raw material, and that it does not fall in proportion to that of raw material. Consequently, the rate of profit falls lower in one instance, and rises higher in the other than would have been the case if the products were sold at their value.<sup>7</sup>

This rather lengthy quotation was necessary only in order to show that Marx was fully aware of the problems connected with the effects of changes in the prices of the elements of constant capital and of changes in market conditions of competition (of supply and demand) on the price of the product and on the rate of profit. Marx also devotes a separate chapter on the "Effects of Changes in Wages".

It must nevertheless be admitted that Piero Sraffa's treatment of the subject is very much more exhaustive and satisfactory. His analysis of the problem of the transformation of values into prices has undoubtedly added a new dimension to the subject and has made Marxian economics richer and logically acceptable. It has rudely shaken the pillars of the neoclassical edifice and even of Keynesian work. The reswitching debate in 1966 mirrors this debacle in all its fullness.

### *Real Wages*

Joan Robinson is, however, mainly concerned with the evolution of wages in terms of commodities as capitalism develops. In this connection too she tries to expose an alleged discrepancy between Volumes I and III of *Capital*. According to her, Marx in Volume I states that commodity wages will have a tendency "to remain constant over the future." In Volume III, on the other hand, Marx assumes that "the rate of exploitation tends to remain constant over a long future". However, since productivity increases, a constant rate of exploitation would ensure a rise in commodity wages. Therefore, it is argued, there is a contradiction between Volume I and Volume III.

It is in discussing the determination of the value of labour power in Volume I that Marx refers to this subject:

His (labouring individual's) natural wants such as food, clothing, fuel

and housing vary according to climatic and physical conditions of his country. On the other hand, the number and extent of his so-called necessary wants as also the modes of satisfying them are themselves the product of historical development and depend therefore to a great extent on the degree of civilisation of a country, more particularly on the condition under which, and consequently on the habits and degree of comfort in which, the class of free labourers is formed. *In contradistinction therefore to the case of other commodities there enters into the determination of the value of labour-power a historical and a moral element.*<sup>9</sup> (emphasis added)

This quotation does not support Joan Robinson's assertion that in Marx's opinion, "commodity wages remain fairly constant over the future".

Further, in the chapter entitled "Changes in the Magnitude of the Price of Labour Power and of Surplus Value",<sup>9</sup> Marx continues:

It is, however, possible that, owing to an increase in productiveness, both the labourer and the capitalist may simultaneously be able to appropriate a greater quantity of the necessities without any change in the price of labour power or in surplus value.

Elucidating the same theme he said that if productivity doubles, ... each of them (wages and surplus value) would represent twice as many use-values as before; these use-values being twice as cheap as before.

Further on in the same paragraph Marx says:

It is possible with increasing productiveness of labour for the price of labour-power to keep on falling and yet this fall to be accompanied by a constant growth in the mass of labourer's means of subsistence. But, even in such a case, the fall in the value of labour-power would cause a corresponding rise in surplus-value and thus the abyss between the labourer's position and that of the capitalist would keep on widening.

All the quotations above are taken from Volume I itself and show the fallacy of Joan Robinson's stand that Volumes I and III contradict each other.

In all the three volumes of *Capital* there is no reference to trade union activity as a factor in the determination of wages. This reference occurs in his lectures on "Wages, Price and Profit" in which Marx is at pains to prove how united action of the workers enables them to get rises in their real wages and how a rise in wages causes a proportionate fall in profits. Constancy of the rate of exploitation was a convenient assumption to prove that the rate of profit would tend to fall even when the rate of exploitation is constant. But that has nothing to do with the assertion wrongly attributed to Marx, that commodity wages tend to remain constant. What Marx did emphasise, however, was that even when real wages rise, the gap between the rich and the poor goes on widening.

Moreover, rise in real wages is not automatic. It has to be wrested from the capitalists through trade union action. There is no mysterious tendency for commodity wages to go up with productivity. No trade union leadership can claim credit for such a rise if it is automatic. Workers have to fight for every bit of such rises. And yet the widening gap between the rich and the poor does intensify tension between the two classes.

Marx clearly says: *whether workers' wages are high or low* his miseries increase. And they are miseries emerging from unemployment,—periodic and perennial—wars, destruction of life and property, hazards to workers in their industrial life and a host of other occurrences with which the current times are replete.

### *Falling Rate of Profit*

Joan Robinson makes three assertions in this regard, namely: i)  $K/W$  has remained fairly constant in recent years due to the adoption of capital-saving technology; ii) there is no way of predicting how the ratio will behave in future; iii) even when  $K/W$  rises the rate of profit need not fall.

These three assertions together with her reference to rising commodity wages imply that capitalism is not likely to perish—is not doomed at least in the foreseeable future and that there are some built-in stabilizers which are likely to protect its future. This implication clearly contradicts her later assertion that capitalism is 'doomed'!

Marxist writings in the last hundred years as well as the writings of bourgeois economists from Ricardo down to Lord Keynes, predict that, as development proceeds from decade to decade, investible surplus expands at a greater rate than the national product. Even if we assume that the proportion of surplus income to total income remains constant, one must reasonably expect a tendency for pressure of investment to intensify and for capital equipment to expand at a compound rate. The ratio  $K/W$  or the organic composition of capital has thus a tendency to rise and to lead to a fall in the rate of profit and, consequently, to *secular* economic stagnation. Technological progress which involves saving in the use of capital, undoubtedly prevents the rate of profit from falling. But, simultaneously, it tends to increase investible surplus, whereas the demand for investment suffers a relative fall. This must also tend to intensify stagnation. Capitalism in such a situation can only be saved, and that too temporarily, by engineering an enormous waste of resources in preparing for wars and in actual wars. The history of the last fifty years is a standing testimony to this suicidal waste.

Whether  $K/W$  tends to rise or remain constant, the net effect must always be the same, namely, secular stagnation and the Keynesian therapy which creates more problems than it solves.

It is true that if the rate of rise in  $P/W$  is greater than the rate of rise in  $K/W$ , the profit rate would tend to rise. But its operational significance in saving the capitalist system from doom is negligible. On the

contrary, increase in investible surplus will lead to secular stagnation unless the Keynesian therapy comes into effect in the form of decades of butchery in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, the Philippines and elsewhere.

Joan Robinson has raised some very vital issues which no Marxist can feign to ignore. She asks quite rightly why there has been no revolution in West European countries in the last 120 years; according to the prediction of Marx. It is pertinent to note in this connection that history moves dialectically. The capitalist class has learnt from Marx as much as the working classes have, perhaps more. The Keynesian 'deficit financing' remedy was a short-term capitalist device arising out of the study of Marx by the capitalist class. But this device is already a broken reed. It is proving to be a remedy worse than the disease. It has produced more discontent and hate against the system. It has brought more misery, more destruction and a more macabre dance of the devil of monopoly capital than that practised by competitive capitalism. I am therefore in whole-hearted agreement with Joan Robinson when she says that "capitalism is doomed," though not in the deterministic sense.

I have a feeling that the chief drawback of Joan Robinson's note is that she ignores history and the effect of historical experience both of which have as much role to play in understanding the present, as logical analysis itself. This is not to suggest that Marx has pronounced the last word in socialist thought and writing. A great deal of contribution has been made since his time and it continues to be made even now.

I must confess I have quoted Marx perhaps more remorselessly than most other Marxists may have done. My forlorn hope is that these quotations are not 'irrelevant'. If they are, I shall surely feel ashamed to have acted as I have done in spite of Joan Robinson's warning.

V Y KOLHATKAR

<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol III, Moscow 1959, p 172.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p 873. The Supplement bears the title: "The Law of Value and the Rate of Profit".

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p 872.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p 176.

<sup>5</sup> Joan Robinson, "Marxian Economics Today", *Social Scientist* 8, March 1973, p 44.

<sup>6</sup> Karl Marx, *op. cit.*, p 105.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p 107.

<sup>8</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol I, Moscow 1954, p 171.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p 523.

## NOTE

### *Independence of the Judiciary*

THE question of independence of the judiciary has assumed importance with the supersession of the three judges of the Supreme Court and their consequent resignation.

It is ironic that the Government of India and its spokesmen should now indulge in a spate of speeches that the judiciary must subserve the philosophy of the socialistic pattern of society. Previously criticism used to be levelled at the Marxists that they denigrated the judiciary, that in socialist countries the judiciary is required to toe the line of the ruling party. But now those very iniquities which used to be alleged against the Marxists are being mouthed by the supporters of the present government.

But what is the content of the independence of the judiciary? What Marx has to say about it is:

The judge has no other superior except the law. But the judge is obliged to interpret the law when applying it to a particular case in the way he comprehends it upon conscientious consideration.<sup>1</sup>

That is to say, a judge is independent in so far as he does not act on instructions from, or under dictation by, the administration but he is not independent of law which he must apply according to its true intent and not according as he feels it should be nor shall he apply it to oblige the administration or any person.

The dialectical combination of independence as well as dependence on law is the Marxist conception of the independence of the judiciary.

In Article 112 of the 1936 Soviet Constitution (otherwise known as the Stalin Constitution), this conception finds embodiment in the formulation. "Judges are independent and subject only to the law." A little more explicitly, but expressing the same idea, is Article 96 (1) of the Constitution of the German Democratic Republic which reads:

The judges...are independent in their administration of justice. They are bound only by the Constitution, laws and statutory regulations of the German Democratic Republic.

Marxists, however, do not believe in the theory of justice being blindfolded which the theorists of the camp of the richer classes have sedulously preached. Justice, in the theoretical sense, is neither blindfol-

ded nor impartial, though the judges individually must obey no command except that of the law.

The bourgeois conception (or misconception) stems from the worn-out theory of the division of power between the legislature, the judiciary and the executive. It is as if the judiciary holds the balance, preventing the encroachment of the legislature on the executive or of the executive on the legislature. Marxist theory of the state does not admit of such division of power. If it has the narrow sense of division of administrative functions, such division is a necessity in the complex functioning of the modern state. Bourgeois theorists do, however, make a distinction between the three departments of the state as if they were sharers in power, whereas in fact power is indivisibly wielded by the ruling class and these are merely organs of power. According to Lenin,

The court is an organ of power. The liberals sometimes forget this, but it is a sin for the Marxists to do so<sup>2</sup>.

After the Bolsheviks took over power, Lenin had occasion to discuss the role of the courts in *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government* and he observed that,

the work of the courts is one of the functions of the state administration ... the courts are an *organ of the power* of the proletariat and of the poor peasants<sup>3</sup>.

But the bourgeois theorists fail to note that the independence of the judiciary is still not inconsistent, and can co-exist, with its character as an organ of the state.

Certain adventitious characteristics, born out of past class struggle, have again stuck to the judiciary and tend to confuse its qualitative assessment. In Western countries the judges were appointed by the absolute monarch and feudal lords. When the bourgeoisie rose into prominence, their representatives, particularly the lawyers from their midst, got access to the posts of judges and in the words of Lenin, the bourgeois judges "defended themselves against the feudal lords by means of the principle of irremovability"<sup>4</sup>. This was really a result of class struggle between the ruling feudal nobles and the nascent bourgeois class, but it has now begun to be considered an element of the independence of the judiciary. The reality is veiled and the veil becomes more important than the reality.

This very irremovability is now used by the judiciary against democracy itself<sup>5</sup> because democratisation of the judiciary requires that it must be responsible to the people or the representatives of the people, namely, parliament. It does not mean that the accountability of the judges to parliament which naturally includes the power of parliament to remove the judges would eliminate class justice. In reply to a similar dig by Justice Ginsberg at the International Conference of Judges in 1912, Lenin, with his devastating sarcasm, comments:

Quite so; Your Honour! Democracy in general does not remove the class struggle but merely makes it more conscious, freer and more open. But this is no argument against democracy. It is an argument

in favour of its consistent development all the way through.<sup>6</sup>

Democratisation of the judiciary requires that it should be elective. That would not impinge on its independence but strengthen it. Election by parliament gives the judges the backing of a volume of public confidence which, during their tenure of service, enhances self-confidence and encourages them to obey none but the law. Moreover, the decisions of the judges in matters relating to state policy could get legitimation only from the people. As a jurist from the Federal Republic of Germany remarked:

..I do not think that the parliamentary responsibility of the competent Minister for the particular judicial branch can justify the use of the formula 'In the name of the people' over a sentence deciding politically exclusive issues.<sup>7</sup>

It is true that such election is for a short term only. But permanence of tenure is not any precondition for the independence of the judiciary. Rather, the confidence of the people or the people's representatives "must be constantly earned anew by administering the law in a way promoting legality, justice and the development of society"<sup>8</sup> In fact, more and more jurists are beginning to favour election of judges for a limited period. Kubler is quoted as saying:

With reference to tomorrow's society I do not want to give up as yet the hope for a clear and unambiguous responsibility (of the judges) to Parliament. This would involve as little risk of the courts becoming corrupt or their independence being threatened, as is the case with the State and Constitutional courts of the Federation and in the Lander, where comparable practices of appointing judges have long been in force.<sup>9</sup>

There are countries where judges are elected. In Switzerland the members of the Supreme Federal Court are chosen by the Federal Legislature for six years and those of the Cantonal Courts are elected by the people.

In USA, in five of the states, judges are appointed by the state governor, in two they are chosen by the state legislature but in all the rest the judges are elected by the people for varying terms. Of course, Viscount Bryce in *Modern Democracies* says that state judiciary in the United States is not only incompetent but also corrupt at places. The reason he adduces is that

the party organisations which nominate candidates for election to the Bench can use their influence to reward partisans or to place in power persons whom they intend to use for their own purposes.<sup>10</sup>

The Viscount has his own reasons for saying why state judiciary in the United States is corrupt and inefficient. He asks, "Why does popular election, which the Swiss do not condemn, give bad results in the States of the American Union?" He answers:

Mainly because in the former the matters that come before the Courts are comparatively small, whereas in the latter it may be well worth

the while of a great railway or other incorporated company to secure the election of persons who will favour its interests when they become the subjects of litigation, and such a corporation can influence the party organisation to nominate the men it wants.<sup>11</sup>

The logic of Viscount Bryce in the aforesaid paragraph is the logic of corruption of the judiciary in any bourgeois society. He seems to think that big companies may not have any access to corrupt and bribe a judge where he is appointed and not elected. Experience falsifies him. And what about influence which has many dark alleys to travel to the heart of a judge? Offer or expectation of a comfortable job for a son or son-in-law can do much more than a handsome bribe.

Again, there is indirect influence as well. H Toeplitz quotes Professor Wietholder in his abovementioned article:

In the case of conscious, class-based justice, the judge, in dispensing the law, has to carry out the political instructions of the ruling class. In the case of instinctive class-based justice the ruling class acts through mentalities.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, irrespective of whether the judges are elected or appointed, capitalists and moneybags will try to influence them either directly or indirectly.

It may be that democratic process of election will expose the activities of the monopolists too obviously. But that is what democracy is for. This is no argument against democracy. It is an argument in favour of its consistent development. As Lenin wrote in a different context in his tract *Marxism and Revisionism*:

Economic distinctions are not mitigated but aggravated and intensified under the freedom of 'democratic capitalism'. Parliamentarism does not eliminate but lays bare the innate character even of the most democratic bourgeois republics as organs of class oppression.<sup>13</sup>

Yet—and that is why—democracy is superior to fascism.

Similarly, election of the judges is better than their nomination because the personality of the judges is better assessable on the open platform of democracy rather than behind the screen of private appointment by officials.

Moreover, the independence of the judges is better assured through the democratic process of their selection. Such methods are essential in countries like India where already administrative pressures have begun to build up against the judiciary. It is everybody's experience what great difficulty a judge or a magistrate has to surmount when he has to beat down the resistance of the police to the grant of bail to an accused. And where the police officers themselves are accused of offences against the citizen, the administration takes leave of all scruples and exerts pressure on the judge.

Independence of the judiciary can neither be an exercise in semantics nor an indulgence in a formal approach. Appointment by the people

is the only alternative to the degenerating dependence of the judicial office on the executive.

ARUN PROKAS CHATTERJEE

- <sup>1</sup> Quoted in A Denisov and M Kirichenko, *Soviet State Law*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow 1960.
- <sup>2</sup> V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 25, p 174.
- <sup>3</sup> V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 27, p 266.
- <sup>4</sup> V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 18, p 305.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>7</sup> Cited by H Toeplitz, President of the Association of GDR Lawyers at the Congress on Legal Policy held in Finland, *Law and Legislation in the GDR*, Vol 2, 1971.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup> Viscount Bryce, *Modern Democracies*, Vol II, First Indian Impression, p 424.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>12</sup> *Law and Legislation in the GDR*, Vol 2, 1971.
- <sup>13</sup> V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 15, p 136.

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Review Article*

### *Cambodia's Struggle*

MALCOLM CALDWELL and LEK HOR TAN, *CAMBODIA IN THE SOUTH EAST ASIAN WAR*, Monthly Review Press, New York and London 1973, pp 446, £6.45.

Although now it is nearly one year after the signing of the Vietnam cease-fire, continued US actions in Cambodia reveal the depth of a resolve to hang on to Indochina, come what may. All the same, more than four fifths of the country is in the hands of the liberation forces and the Lon Nol regime in Phnom Penh is in a state of virtual collapse. Aroused by aggression, Cambodia has shown the transformation of a supposedly lethargic people from nationalism to resurgence and revolution.

This book analyses the history of Cambodia and the evolution of US foreign policy leading to the convergence of 1970: the overthrow of Prince Norodom Sihanouk and the direct invasion of US troops. It contains detailed accounts of Sihanouk's pursuit of independence and neutrality, US intrigues, at home and abroad, which frustrated these efforts and his final emergence as head of state in exile in China, dedicated to Cambodia's national liberation in alliance with North Vietnam, the NLF and the Pathet Lao.

The united resistance of the Indochinese people against foreign aggression has a parallel in the 1884-6 anti-French struggle, one of the first people's wars of independence in Asian history. It was also fought in the name of a king, Norodom. France's 'pacification' campaign forced the various national and regional movements—especially Cambodian and Vietnamese—into a united resistance.

The French won and survived in Cambodia until the 1950s. Cambodia's economic value to France, in addition to the tax revenues, was enhanced with the introduction of rubber cultivation in the 1920s. This was to have a significant consequence. It was plantation workers radicalized and politicalized in the miserable conditions of the rubber estates

who later played a prominent role in the armed resistance to the French and the Americans.

Apart from the processing of agricultural products, there was no industrialization prior to independence. Stunted in many ways by the peculiarities and repressions of French colonialism, Cambodia remained essentially a rural society. In the year 1963 for which figures are available, 81 per cent of the population were in the primary sector, 4 per cent in the secondary and 15 per cent in the tertiary. Of those in the primary sector 81 per cent were rice-growers, 3 per cent were fishermen and 16 per cent engaged in other agricultural pursuits. The colonial character of the economy is also reflected in the degree of urbanization: only 10 per cent are city dwellers, most of whom inhabit Phnom Penh, the capital (p 111).

The economic 'somnolence' was paralleled by a political apathy in contrast to the turmoil of ideas and movements in neighbouring Vietnam. French neglect of education prevented the rise of an indigenous class of intellectuals independent of the aristocracy. By 1939, only four Cambodians had matriculated from a senior high school established in 1935. In 1941 the only secondary school had 537 pupils drawn from a population of some three million. The objective circumstances in which the grievances and national consciousness of the masses might have found expression seemed to be lacking.

A genuine nationalist movement did not begin until the late 1930s although the Communist Party of Indochina had been formed in 1930. In practice, the nationalist movement was almost wholly Vietnamese. The Cambodian aristocracy, not to mention the royals, although restless and even rebellious at times under humiliating French tutelage, played no active part in the nationalist upsurge that swept the rest of Asia during this period.

In 1941, the French authorities elevated Prince Norodom to the throne. Chosen mainly for his youth he was expected to be a pliable instrument of control in a delicate situation with competing forces—Japanese, Vichy and Free French, anti-monarchist Khmer nationalists, Vietnamese Communist partisans, their Cambodian allies and Thai revanchist circles—ceaselessly jockeying for power.

Sihanouk refused to play the French game, although he was made to sign a convention in 1949 which included clauses placing the country within the French Union. Nothing much was heard of him till 1953. His principal concern during this period was independence which, he felt, could be won by patient negotiations. In 1953 he made a futile mission to France and then went into a dramatic 'self exile' at Battambang and Siem Riep, strongholds of anti-French struggle, in a bid to use the powerful guerilla struggle to strengthen his bargaining power.

The insurgent Left which led the struggle was represented by Khmer Issarak and its military wing, the Khmer People's Liberation Army, which maintained a close liaison with the Vietminh (under Ho Chi Minh and Nguyen Giap), and the Pathet Lao. A Joint National United Front was

set up in 1951 when US aid accounted for 15 per cent of the French military budget in Indochina. (This figure was to rise steadily to about 80 per cent in 1953-54). Even at this early stage, the leaders of the Indochinese revolution were aware of the ominous implications of this rising commitment. They pointed out, in their manifesto of 1951, that American intervention was aimed at the re-enslavement of the three peoples of Indochina (p 44).

The Left resistance represented at the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina did not press its claims because the settlement held promises of a constitutional struggle. Cambodia was to remain truly neutral, and there were to be no reprisals against the Liberation Army. The Khmer resistance disbanded, but did not dismantle its infrastructure.

The US did not sign the Geneva Accord, nor did it accept the Conference decisions. Realizing that its whole policy in Southeast Asia was in danger of collapsing under a wave of neutralism which the example of Cambodia had just launched, the US Government set out on a course of intervention aimed at changing Cambodia's policy and ideology. To a top-level mission led by Senator Knowland and Ambassador Heath, Sihanouk and his ministers firmly stated their view that Cambodia was not against Communist regimes as long as they left it in peace.

As Wilfred Burchett comments:

Knowland's arguments that this was a dangerous policy, that one should not await the danger but go out to meet it by attacking "communists and Vietminh" made no impression... Heath added that the urgency of the fight against communism demanded that Cambodia agree to France having the sole military command for Cambodia, as well as Laos and Vietnam. Penn Nouth, with Sihanouk's backing, refused. The Knowland-Heath visit marked the beginning of prolonged and intensive US interference in Cambodia's internal affairs, soon to take the form of attempts to do away with Sihanouk and his brand of neutrality (p 52).

Developments across the border in Vietnam are woven inextricably through the story of Cambodia in the years since Geneva. As American desperation mounted with defeat after defeat, there was a pulling together of the threads binding the three peoples, until their interests became one: expulsion of all US troops from Indochina. Sihanouk rejected categorically American overtures to join the SEATO. The overriding purpose of his neutralist policy was one of avoiding great power involvement in the internal affairs which he saw first in Vietnam and then in Laos.

Genuine neutralism was incompatible with the subservience demanded by American imperialism. The kind of 'neutralist' desired and recognized by the US was Prince Souvanna Phouma of Laos, who had long since succumbed to American pressures.

In 1963 Sihanouk decisively rejected all American aid and demanded that non-embassy American personnel leave the country. In 1965 in protest against the bombing of North Vietnam and the invasion of

southern Cambodia, he decided to break off diplomatic relations. Before refusal of aid, the prince argued in articles and speeches that US aid never related to the real needs of the receiving country but to the degree of docility of its political alignment, its strategic importance, or its receptiveness to pressure aimed at changing its alignment (pp 120-121).

Experience taught him that American aid is above all aimed at the privileged classes from whom the benefactors hope to recruit allies and agents. It irremediably affects indigenous ways of life and morals and sows the seeds of corruption. In every case it forces countries to abandon the independence and distinctiveness of their social life and destroys national unity, for patriotic forces, especially the young, will not accept the treachery of their elders who sell out to the US.

Again, American aid inevitably brings an American presence inside the receiving country, a presence which grows, arrogantly offending the sensibilities of the natives. In these circumstances a popular revolution against the Americans becomes inevitable. In support of this revolution, the prince wanted the Communist neighbours to intervene. Wherever the Americans implant themselves the Communists must follow to combat them.

It did not take long for Sihanouk to realize that American leaders would not relinquish their design to bring him to the Western camp or, failing that, to overthrow him. On the other hand, the experiences with the socialist countries had been quite different. Cambodia had benefited in three ways from the Eastern bloc: tangible economic and technical assistance (which totalled 66.85 million dollars during 1956-63); exchange of diplomatic relations; and support of Cambodian neutralism.

The cornerstone of the policy of neutralism was placed in the relationship with North Vietnam and China. Just as Sihanouk understood the impermanent nature of American presence in Southeast Asia, he perceived the crucial importance of China in its influence on Asia, a perception which characterizes his political outlook.

To China too, Cambodia is of vital importance. It is in a sense the centrepiece of a potential pro-American, anti-Communist bloc aimed at Vietnam and China. An integral part of China's policy was, therefore, to assure the Cambodian government of Peking's respect for its neutralist policy. When the Sino-Soviet split became overt in 1960, Cambodia's evaluation of the importance of the two powers was quickly evident: as early as 1962, diplomatic relations were established with Albania indicating on which side Cambodia had cast its lot.

Soviet-Cambodian relations were complicated by China's backing for Sihanouk. The Soviet Union adopted a cautious wait-and-see attitude to Lon Nol while taking only non-committal token cognizance of the National United Front. Even today, recognition is withheld from the Royal Government of National Union of which Sihanouk is President. Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia among the East European countries follow the Moscow line on Cambodia.

It was, however, the perfidy of the Western powers which toppled Sihanouk. With the intention of meeting a serious economic crisis in 1969, the prince took a gamble in turning to the international multilateral agencies for financial assistance. As these bodies are dominated by the US, he started fishing for American goodwill. There were also moves to attract American investment and tourism in a 'gamble that failed' miserably.

Any lingering doubt about American role in the overthrow of Sihanouk and the installation of the Lon Nol clique has now been dispelled. In his book, *My War with the CIA*<sup>1</sup> the prince has properly assessed and documented US machinations in Cambodia's domestic politics masterminded by the agents of the American intelligence and espionage apparatus. Even while the US embassy was closed down from 1965 to 1969, the prince had stated that "America was inside the castle walls, that is, inside our homes". In 1969, in an overture of goodwill, the Americans were allowed to reopen their embassy at Charge d' Affaires level. Sihanouk miscalculated very badly in thinking that he could bring them back with impunity.

The leaders of the Left resistance, Khmer Rouge, warned Sihanouk that it would be 'political suicide' to reopen the embassy as it would simplify the Americans' problems of co-ordination and communication. In the event, this warning proved correct. After the coup, the US embassy became the centre of Cambodian political power, its staff increasing from 6 in 1969 to 120 at the end of 1971.

Ultimately, it will not be the foreign powers and their henchmen but the people and their National United Front of Cambodia who will be the authors and actors of the drama of their own lives and destinies. The NUFC is a broad national democratic movement covering all social classes and strata of the Khmer people (workers, peasants, petty-bourgeoisie, national bourgeoisie, monks, patriotic members of the royal family, national minorities and intellectuals) based on a worker-peasant alliance comprising over 90 per cent of the population.

Way back in July 1971 the People's National Liberation Armed Forces controlled 85 per cent of the territory of Cambodia with a population of 5 million (p 354). This area has been again expanding and only tiny urban pockets remain in the hands of government troops. On liberated territory, extensive reforms have come into force. Rents were reduced and usury abolished. Intensive political education work has encouraged participation in peasant associations, cooperatives, mutual aid teams and trade unions. Improvements in cultivation methods have increased production and this will facilitate a protracted liberation war, if necessary. Education is free, and illiteracy has been eliminated. Medical care has been rapidly improved and extended to every hamlet. Religious faiths are respected and the rights of national minorities fully guaranteed.

Lon Nol's officers are too preoccupied with money-making operations to have any time for military administration or actual combat. The

generals, for example, pocket the salaries of troops which do not exist except on the government's payroll. Even their American mentors are exasperated that instead of fighting with what they have got, the mercenary officers insist on expensive modern equipment to boost their egos and, with luck, their Swiss bank accounts. In contrast is the example of the people's militia which performs, in addition to village defence, economic and social tasks particularly in agricultural production. Its slogan is 'Rifle in one hand to kill the enemy; hoe in the other to do productive labour'.

Also in contrast to the chaos in the towns and in Phnom Penh, prices in the liberated areas are kept low and stable. The programme of the liberation forces in all sectors of life reflects their own prolonged experience as guerillas as well as the lessons they have learnt from the NLF and Pathet Lao, all tested in practice. As the liberation forces progressively develop a more secure and self-sufficient base, the Lon Nol regime slides deeper into dependence, bankruptcy, social isolation and defeat.

P N VARUGHESE

- <sup>1</sup> Norodom Sihanouk and Wilfred Burchett, *My War with the CIA*, Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1973.

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## **ANNOUNCEMENT**

Starting with this number **Social Scientist** will come to you from Trivandrum. From the experience of the last couple of months, the decision to shift has meant unavoidable delays in printing and despatch. Please accept our apologies for the consequent inconvenience. It is our immediate objective, now that things are being normalized, to speed up and bring out the journal regularly on time.

### **New Address**

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and not necessarily of the editors or of the Indian School of Social Sciences.*

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## FROM THE EDITOR

LAST September the armed forces of Chile shattered the hopes of 'la via Chilleana,' the Chilean way of 'peaceful transition to Socialism.' What are the implications in general, and for India in particular, of the tragic turn of events in Chile?

This issue of the SOCIAL SCIENTIST opens with a reappraisal of parliamentarism and 'peaceful transition' in the light of the Chilean experience. As contributions to the seminar on *Chile and the Parliamentary Road to Socialism* organized by the Indian School of Social Sciences, Calcutta, the three selected papers that follow reflect a wide range of views and assessments on the subject.

*E M S NAMBOODIRIPAD*

## *Chile and the Parliamentary Road to Socialism*

THE military coup in Chile has dashed all the revisionist illusions that the election of Salvador Allende as President would further confirm the thesis of 'peaceful transformation through the parliamentary path'.

Naturally, therefore, a good deal of discussion is taking place in our country, as well as abroad, about the lessons to be drawn from the experience of Chile. The whole question of the validity or otherwise, the extent of usefulness, of the struggle on the parliamentary arena for the further development of the democratic and working-class movement is once again being discussed in the light of this latest experience.

It is proposed in this paper to examine the question both from the theoretical and practical angles. While examining it from the practical angle, it is proposed to deal with the experience we have gathered in our own country, where for more than two decades the leftist parties and organizations have functioned under the bourgeois parliamentary system, going to the extent of forming state governments which functioned for sometime: twice in Kerala during 1957-59 and in 1967-69; in West Bengal during 1967-69.

### *False Comparison*

An interesting remark was made by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on the relevance to India of the military coup in Chile. Speaking at the

AICC meeting held a few days after President Allende was murdered, she visualized the possibility of herself being attacked, as Allende was, by counter-revolutionaries within the country and abroad.

Such a comparison is, to say the least, ridiculous. For, at the very session of the AICC at which Indira Gandhi made this remark, the leadership of the party headed by her refused to include, in the official resolution adopted by it, a denunciation of the US for its unconcealed role in organizing the coup in Chile. From the speech delivered by External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh at the session itself as well as from the various diplomatic moves, it was clear that the government was not prepared to associate itself with the worldwide denunciation of US imperialism in Chile.

The long period of over 26 years during which the Congress Party has been in power has in fact shown that, unlike the Allende government in Chile, the Indian government and the ruling party are pursuing policies of collaboration with imperialism. The many-sided (economic, cultural, political and even military) bonds between our ruling classes and the imperialist powers, far from loosening, are ever more and more tightening.

Not that there have been no occasions when conflicts broke out between them. Such occasions did undoubtedly arise, as in the years immediately before the Bandung Conference and after, and more recently at the time of the Bangladesh struggle. Despite these temporary lapses, however, the long-term trend has been one of expanding collaboration between private monopolists in the imperialist countries and big business houses in India. At the government level too, foreign 'aid' has become such an inseparable, integral part of our national planning that the whole edifice of national development will collapse the moment that 'aid' is withdrawn.

During the eight years that Indira Gandhi has stayed at the helm of the administration, there has been no departure from this process; it has, on the other hand, strengthened. There is thus no logic or reason behind the argument that the imperialists would be anxious to remove the Congress Party or its present leader, Indira Gandhi, as Allende and his colleagues in Chile were removed.

### *Liberation Struggle*

If at all any parallel were to be drawn between developments in India and the military coup in Chile, it is in connection with action taken by the Congress Party in general and Indira Gandhi in person when her party was defeated in the elections. Take for instance, what was done against the first non-Congress government led by a left and democratic party in any state of India—the Communist government of Kerala—in 1959.

This, of course, cannot provide an exact parallel, since the removal of the Kerala government, unlike in Chile, had the appearance of a 'constitutional action' taken under the authority vested in the Central Govern-

ment in terms of the Constitution. It is, however, similar in one respect: just as in Chile, so in Kerala too, there was an executive administration elected by the people and pursuing policies which were not to the liking of the reactionary vested interests.

Unlike in Chile, the authority of the left and democratic government here was confined to one particular state in the whole country. That administration, therefore, had extremely limited powers; the essence of state power, that is, direct control over the military, and real though less direct control over the police, jails, courts and so on rested with the Centre. There was therefore no necessity for organizing a military coup against the Kerala government. The exercise of the constitutional power which, under the terms of the Constitution, rested in the Central Government, was enough to serve the same purpose, as was served in Chile through the military coup.

Even then, it is significant that Indira Gandhi as the then President of the Congress organized the notorious 'liberation struggle,' denounced even by the bourgeois liberal constitutionalists as an unconstitutional direct action, resorted to by the party ruling at the Centre against the government of a state where the people had rejected it. It was behind the facade of such an unconstitutional direct action, hailed by the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, as a big 'mass upsurge' that the 'constitutional authority' vested in the Central Government was exercised to overthrow the state government.

Such a combination of unconstitutional action organized by the ruling party from below and the apparently 'constitutional action' taken by the Central Government from the top, was enough for the ruling party under the specific conditions of India prevailing at that time. It was however clear from what was done by Indira Gandhi as Congress President and by the Central Government controlled by her party that, in case what happened in Kerala in 1957-59 repeats itself at any time on an all-India scale, the ruling party headed by Indira Gandhi now (and she herself personally) would not hesitate to do what the Chilean counter-revolutionaries, assisted by their friends and patrons abroad, did to the Allende regime.

This conclusion was further confirmed a decade later during 1967-69. The Congress Party was once again defeated in a general election, and defeated much more extensively than in 1957. It was not one state but eight that were now lost to the Congress.

Unlike in Kerala a decade ago, however, the governments that replaced the Congress in all these states were heterogeneous in political composition. The ruling party, therefore, could play upon the political and partisan conflicts among the various constituents of the coalition governments in every one of these states in order to topple them. There was no need to organize a 'liberation struggle' of the type whipped up in Kerala a decade ago, or for the Centre to intervene. These governments were one by one toppled through intrigues of various types, including

of course, the totally unconstitutional use of the powers vested in the Governors.

Even at this stage, however, the Central Government headed by Indira Gandhi showed that, if these apparently 'political methods' failed to yield the results desired, they would not hesitate to use force and terror. The most vivid example of this was furnished by the semi-fascist terror unleashed in West Bengal before, during and after the 1972 elections to the state legislature. The shameless manner in which polling booths were captured by the armed gangs organized by the ruling party; genuine voters prevented from using their electoral rights; thousands of ballot papers stamped in favour of the ruling coalition in the name of voters who never entered the polling booths; counting officers blackmailed into declaring defeated candidates as elected: these goings-on were so notorious that even newspapers partial to the ruling party have admitted them.

The 'liberation struggle' in Kerala in 1959 and the rigging of elections in West Bengal in 1972 are thus graphic examples to show where the Congress government headed at present by Indira Gandhi is taking the country. Fortunately for this party, India is so large, and has besides a federal political system that, long before the left democratic movement can become powerful enough to become a challenge at the Central level, whatever challenge comes up at the state level can one by one be removed. The way in which they are being removed, however, shows unmistakably that the method that would be resorted to if and when such a challenge comes at the Central level would be the same as was adopted by the Chilean counter-revolutionaries against the Allende regime.

### *What History Teaches*

Nor is this unnatural for the Congress regime which is bourgeois-landlord in its class character and is led by the big bourgeoisie, closely collaborating with foreign capitalists. The classes that are in alliance (the bourgeoisie and the landlords) are interested in keeping a parliamentary democratic set-up so long as the revolutionary forces headed by the working class are not powerful enough to be an effective challenge to replace the existing regime. Such a parliamentary democratic facade helps them to keep the petty-bourgeois masses as well as backward sections of the working class and peasantry under their political influence.

But the moment these very institutions of parliamentary democracy are effectively utilized by the revolutionary forces headed by the working class to rally the petty-bourgeois masses against the regime and thus win parliamentary majority (as they did in Kerala in 1957, Kerala and West Bengal in 1967, West Bengal again in 1969), the mask of parliamentary democracy would be thrown off and the reality of class dictatorship emerges. This is what happened to all bourgeois regimes, as for instance, when for the first time in the history of the international working-class movement the German working class was gathering sufficient force to challenge the then regime and Bismarck instituted the reign of 'iron and

blood'. Again after the First World War, when a new revolutionary upsurge threatened the bourgeois regimes in country after country in Europe, fascism made its appearance and became a threat to democracy. Subsequently, in the 1930s, the advance of revolutionary democracy in Spain was met by the counter-revolutionary forces by organizing military force against the Spanish democracy. In the post-Second World War period too, the 'menace' of the new revolutionary upsurge was countered by the counter-revolutionaries in a series of massacres such as those in Indonesia where the Communist Party became the strongest in any country outside the Socialist World.

The military coup and massacres in Chile are only the latest in the series. India's ruling party, headed at present by Indira Gandhi, represents the very same forces which resorted to these methods in country after country. It is therefore ridiculous for Indira Gandhi to pose as if she were likely to become a victim of counter-revolutionary terror as the late President Allende. She is, in fact, one of the organizers, rather than among the victims, of counter-revolutionary terror of the type used in Chile.

It was after assimilating this teaching of history and analysing the actual correlation of forces in India that the CPI(M) included in its Programme a passage explaining the possibilities as well as the limitations of the struggle in the parliamentary arena. Not only did the Party stress the importance of work in bourgeois parliamentary institutions in general but it visualized the possibility of forming governments at the state level which would be challenging the class policy of the bourgeois-landlord government ruling at the Centre. Here is the relevant passage:

The Party will obviously have to work out various interim slogans in order to meet the requirements of a rapidly changing political situation. Even while keeping before the people the task of dislodging the present ruling classes and establishing a new democratic state and government based on the firm alliance of the working class and peasantry, the Party will utilize all the opportunities that present themselves of bringing into existence governments pledged to carry out a modest programme of giving immediate relief to the people. The formation of such governments will give a great fillip to the revolutionary movement of the working people and thus help the process of building the democratic front. It, however, would not solve the economic and political problems of the nation in any fundamental manner. *The Party, therefore, will continue to educate the mass of the people on the need for replacing the present bourgeois-landlord state and government headed by the big bourgeoisie, even while utilizing all opportunities for forming such governments of a transitional character which give immediate relief to the people and thus strengthen the mass movement.*<sup>1</sup> (Emphasis added)

### *How to Use the Government*

This was written in the latter half of 1964. In just over two years

after this, the fourth general elections took place in the country and confirmed the correctness of the analysis made in the Party Programme. Non-Congress governments in which the left and democratic parties were in leading positions came to be formed in Kerala and West Bengal. We are not referring here to the other non-Congress governments, since the left forces were far weaker there than in Kerala and West Bengal; these non-Congress governments were dominated either by the Jana Sangh, or the Swatantra, the BKD, the Akalis or the DMK, although the right CPI and SSP participated in some of them.

The situation which arose out of this was analysed by the Central Committee of the CPI (M) which, in a report under the title "New Situation and New Tasks", once again emphasized the possibilities and limitations of these governments. The task before the Party and its democratic allies in the non-Congress coalitions in the two states were outlined as follows:

...there is one point to be constantly borne in mind by our comrades working in the UF cabinets. We cannot forecast the actual lifespan of these governments and all the possible vicissitudes they will have to undergo during the tenure of their ministries. We cannot also definitely say how much relief can be given to the people and what actual possibilities are opened up for these governments to do so. Our ministries, without either entertaining undue illusions about giving relief in a big way, or courting despair that nothing can be done under the present set-up, should always bear in mind that they as the Party's representatives, should strive to tender our *bona fides* to the people. Any failure on this score compromises the Party's political line in the eyes of the people; adversely affects the independent mobilization of the people, and their activities; and all this in turn, will not help us to resist and overcome the vacillations, wobbings and sometimes even possible backsliding of some democratic parties in the UFs and their respective governments. *In a word, the UF governments that we have now are to be treated and understood as instruments of struggle in the hands of our people, more than as governments that actually possess adequate power, that can materially and substantially give relief to the people. In clear class terms, our Party's participation in such governments is one specific form of struggle to win more and more people, and more and more allies for the proletariat and its allies in the struggle for the cause of People's Democracy and at a later stage for Socialism.* (Emphasis added)

This approach of the Party was denounced on the one hand by the right opportunist, and on the other by the left sectarian, critics of the Party. The former denounced it as 'negative', 'refusal to make constructive contributions' to solve the problems of the nation, and so on. The latter, on the other hand, denounced it as 'neo-revisionism', 'surrender to the ruling classes', 'collaboration with the class enemy in suppressing the people', and so on.

Each of them in its respective way contributed to the disruption of

the democratic fronts that had come into existence. It was this disruption, caused by the two deviations from the correct Marxist-Leninist path, that helped the ruling party in toppling the governments and in unleashing a campaign of ruthless terror against the democratic movement. Having helped the ruling classes in thus disrupting the united front of democratic opposition, the right opportunists joined the ruling party in forming anti-people coalitions. The left sectarians, on the other hand, helped the ruling classes in their campaign of terror, a section of them going to the extent of acting as conscious instruments in the hands of the ruling party in its diabolical plans of terror and murder. The semi-fascist terror which preceded and followed the rigged elections in West Bengal in 1972 was the culmination of these developments.

### *Use Parliamentary Forum to Fight Terror*

Does it follow from all this that it was wrong to adopt the general line of fighting on the parliamentary arena and forming governments when the opportunity arose, as is alleged by the left sectarians? We do not think so. Working on the parliamentary arena would, in fact, help the struggle against the semi-fascist terror in West Bengal itself. That is why the CPI (M) adopted and continues the tactical line of using the forum of parliament and all state legislatures (except that of West Bengal where it is adopting the tactics of boycott in order to keep up the position of protest and opposition to the semi-fascist terror on the basis of which elections in that state were rigged). The party is, in fact, using the forum of parliament to expose the semi-fascist terror in West Bengal along with the exposure of other anti-people policies and measures of the Central Government. Let it be noted further that, in West Bengal itself, other forms of legal and constitutional work are adopted with a view to co-ordinate the economic and political struggles of the people as well as to unite all the forces of left democracy for providing a viable political alternative to the regime.

The correctness of this general political and tactical line has been borne out by the fact that, while the Party was for a time isolated from the rest of the democratic movement, it has now been able to break out of this isolation. The reforging of relations with all the left and democratic parties (except the right C P) which were constituents in the former non-Congress coalition in West Bengal; the series of struggles fought on the basis of the unity of left and democratic parties in Kerala; the liaison that has been established on an all-India scale between the CPI (M) and the Socialist Party; all these show that the line of unity of left and democratic forces is re-establishing its validity.

Whether this revival of the unity of left and democratic forces in the country would once again lead to the emergence of situations like those of 1967-69 depends on a number of circumstances. It is therefore impossible to make any forecast for the future. The fact however remains that the efforts of the left and democratic parties, groups, mass organi-

zations and individuals should be to see that the utmost possible political unity is forged among them, so that a viable political alternative to the present ruling party can emerge at least at the state level.

If these efforts succeed, it might once again lead to that very polarization of forces, behind the non-Congress regimes representing the radical popular forces on the one hand and the reactionary forces represented by the Central Government on the other, which was witnessed in 1957 in Kerala and in 1967 in both Kerala and West Bengal. If it does, it would help the further advance of the popular democratic movement. It would however, be a dangerous illusion if somebody thinks that the electoral victories won on the basis of these united fronts will open the way for that 'peaceful transformation through the parliamentary path' about which the right revisionists talk loudly and insistently. Equally wrong would it be to give up all efforts to make skilful use of the struggle on the parliamentary front in the interest of the advance of the popular forces, calling such use of parliamentary institutions as 'revisionism'.

### *Impact of Left Democratic Government*

In our country, we have, on two occasions, seen the emergence and fall of such governments of popular democratic unity. Would it be correct to say that this has had no positive impact on the advance of the popular democratic forces in the country? Why is it that the Party which made use of these opportunities—the undivided Communist Party and subsequently the CPI (M)—grew into the strongest party in the two states where such non-Congress governments were formed under the leadership of that Party? The reason is that, functioning with all the limitations imposed on them by the specific correlation of class and political forces and constitutional provisions, the governments formed in these two states under the leadership of the Party showed themselves to be the alternative to the bourgeois-landlord ruling party at the Centre, challenging the whole basis of the economy and policy represented by the present regime.

It is well known that the state governments under the existing Constitution have no real power to bring about basic social transformations. Despite this limitation, however, the Communist government in 1957-59 and the United Front government of Kerala and West Bengal in 1967-69 struck at the roots of the class policy, as is seen in these governments' approach to the police. Not that anything basic was done by way of 'reforming the police administration', but the very declaration that the police is not to be used as the hand-maid of the owning classes for suppressing the struggles of the working people showed that here was a government different in its basic approach to the class essence of state power. No wonder therefore that the ruling classes, their newspapers and all the bourgeois political parties in the country, talked of 'breakdown of law and order', 'sense of insecurity', and so on.

It was just because of the danger which the existence of such governments constituted to the regime that the ruling classes insisted on

removing those governments through the 'liberation struggle' in 1957-59 and through the various forms of 'toppling' in 1967-69, and, when it was seen that such a government would once again be voted into office in 1972, resorted to semi-fascist terror in West Bengal. The intensity of violence directed against these governments is an indication of the growing conflict between the people and the regime, symbolized by the emergence, functioning and fall of these governments.

### *Growing Conflict, Not Peaceful Advance*

In future too, the emergence of any such government in any state should not be looked upon as the 'beginning of a new path of peaceful advance', as the right opportunists did towards the formation of the Kerala government in 1957, and towards the United Front governments of Kerala and West Bengal in 1967-69. These should, on the other hand, be seen as a stage in the process of the further intensification of the conflict between the mass of the people headed by the working class on the one hand and the ruling classes symbolized by the Congress government at the Centre on the other. There is no question of the ruling classes permitting the 'peaceful replacement' of their regime by a new popular democratic regime. The only question is the method through which the ruling classes would try to subvert the popular democratic governments. Marxist-Leninists should therefore carry on a simultaneous struggle both against the negative attitude to the struggle on the parliamentary arena as well as against the illusions of a 'smooth and peaceful' advance through the parliamentary path disseminated by right opportunism.

Looked at from this point of view, Chile certainly has its lessons for the entire international movement. It shows how the toiling people headed by the working class can advance in their struggle against reactionaries if the fighting organizations of the people are headed by a united front of Communists, Socialists and all other revolutionary democrats. It was the formation of the Popular Unity Bloc consisting of the Communist Party of Chile, the Chilean Socialist Party and other revolutionary forces that enabled the working people of Chile to unite in order to further the advance of the revolutionary movement.

It showed at the same time that this advance of the revolutionary people would not lead to that 'peaceful transition through the parliamentary path' which is held out before the people by the revisionists. On the other hand, the advance registered by the fighting people headed by the united front of all the revolutionary parties, groups and organizations would be countered by the reactionaries, who will resort to violence to bar the advance of the revolutionary forces. This lesson drawn by Marxism-Leninism from the experience of world history has once again been confirmed by the manner in which the reactionaries in Chile, aided by the American imperialists, carried on a running battle against the Allende regime during the entire period of its existence and ultimately overthrew it by methods of terror.

### *Class Essence of State Power in Chile*

We have not dealt with, nor is it possible to deal with, the question whether the leadership of the Popular Unity Bloc in Chile committed any right opportunist mistakes and whether any Left sectarian mistakes were committed by any group within the Bloc. These are questions which will no doubt be examined by the revolutionaries in Chile itself.

It is however, possible and necessary for us to relate the situation that arose in Chile after the election of Salvador Allende as President of the country to the theoretical question of state power. As Lenin noted, "the basic question in any revolution is that of state power. Unless this question is understood, there can be no intelligent participation in the revolution, let alone guidance of the revolution."

The above passage occurs in Lenin's article under the title "The Dual Power," the name given by him to the political situation that arose in Russia after the February revolution. The 'duality' of power consists in the fact that "alongside the Provisional Government, the government of the *bourgeoisie*, another government has arisen, so far weak and incipient, but undoubtedly a government that actually exists and is growing—the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies." Lenin went on:

What is the class composition of this other government? It consists of the proletariat and peasants (in soldiers' uniforms). What is the political nature of this government? It is a revolutionary dictatorship i.e., a power directly based on revolutionary seizure, on the direct initiative of the people from below, and *not on a law* enacted by a centralized state power. It is an entirely different kind of power from the one that generally exists in the parliamentary bourgeois-democratic republics of the usual type still prevailing in the advanced countries of Europe and America. This circumstance is often overlooked, often not given enough thought, yet it is the crux of the matter. This power is of *the same type* as the Paris Commune of 1871.<sup>8</sup>

The election of Salvador Allende of the Popular Unity Bloc in Chile also led to the emergence of a dual power, though this dual power was basically different from that of Russia after the February Revolution. Unlike the latter, the former was "based on a law enacted by a Central Government" and not on "revolutionary usurpation, on the direct initiative of the masses from below". It would therefore be ridiculous to compare the Chilean situation after the election of Allende to the Russian situation after February 1917.

The fact however remains that the 1970 election led to the emergence of two centres of power—one around the Popular Unity Bloc headed by Allende and the other behind the reactionary classes, who had a majority in parliament. It was with the latter that effective control over the military rested, since most of the officers of the armed forces were politically ranged against the Popular Unity Bloc. Formal control over the army, however, vested in the President and therefore the popular

democratic forces united in the Popular Unity Bloc had a voice in the exercise of power. Hence arose the continuous conflict between the popular forces represented by the President and the reactionary forces entrenched in parliament and in most of the executive organs of power.

Even in relation to the Russian situation after the February Revolution, let us note Lenin's analysis:

This remarkable feature, unparalleled in history in such a form, has led to the *interlocking of two* dictatorships: the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie ... and the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry...

There is not the slightest doubt that such an "interlocking" *cannot* last long. Two powers *cannot exist* in a State. One of them is bound to pass away; and the entire Russian bourgeoisie is already trying its hardest everywhere and in every way to keep out and weaken the Soviets, to reduce them to nought, and to establish the undivided power of the bourgeoisie.<sup>4</sup>

This effort of the Russian bourgeoisie however, could be countered in Russia because the specific feature of Russian dual power was that the proletariat and peasantry were "clad in soldiers' uniforms" and armed. The violence and terror of the bourgeoisie could therefore be countered by the revolutionary use of force by the people. That was why the revolution could ultimately triumph, overthrow the bourgeois Provisional Government and establish the sole power of the proletariat and peasantry in the second (November) Revolution.

In Chile, however, there was no such revolutionary power based on the armed people. The popular forces led by the Popular Unity Bloc were therefore virtually defenceless against counter-revolution. This weakness could have been overcome if the government of the Popular Unity Bloc used its power to arm the people, or a split had taken place within the armed forces. It is not clear whether either of these developments took place on a limited scale. It is however, clear that, if at all either of them had taken place, it was not on a large enough scale to counteract the coup which therefore succeeded.

Does all this mean that the struggle waged by the popular forces in Chile, leading to the emergence of the Allende regime and the three-year-long existence of that regime have been a waste? No. For, although not yet powerful enough to meet and defeat the counter-revolutionary force by revolutionary force, the popular forces did advance in the struggle for the formation, continued existence and final defence of the Allende regime. The resistance that is now being put up to the militarist regime will no doubt further strengthen and consolidate these popular forces, win more and more allies to their side and create rifts in the ruling classes, so that more favourable opportunities will arise in the future for the further advance of the revolutionary cause.

The Leninist concept of 'dual power', inevitably leading to the conflict of two powers, each of them striving for mastery over the other

and for the establishment of its own sole power, is as applicable to several other situations in the post-Second World War period as to Chile.

It was true for instance of Indonesia where the Sukarno regime, in which the Communist Party shared power, was overthrown by organized counter-revolution and hundreds of thousands were cold-bloodedly butchered.

It was because the lessons of such developments were not learnt that a right opportunist understanding arose that regimes like those in Indonesia and Chile could be the beginning of a process of relatively peaceful transition. The military coup in Chile, like counter-revolutions in several other countries, has given a heavy blow to such a right opportunist understanding.

It would however be wrong to draw the conclusion that whatever opportunities arise for such a development of the popular democratic forces leading to such situations as the emergence of rival centres of power (however partial and limited they may be as in Indonesia and Chile) should not be taken advantage of. What should be guarded against is the facile idea that, when such situations arise, they would enable the popular forces to develop their own state power without armed conflicts. Making such facile assumptions and working out tactics in accordance with these is the essence of right opportunism in the present day.

*(This paper, was presented at the Seminar on Chile and the Parliamentary Road to Socialism, organized by the Indian School of Social Sciences, Calcutta, on November 28, 1973)*

- <sup>1</sup> *Programme of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)*, para 112, pp 48-49.
- <sup>2</sup> *New Situation and the New Tasks Confronting the Party*, Report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).
- <sup>3</sup> V I Lenin, "The Dual Power" *Collected Works*, Vol 24, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1964, pp 38.
- <sup>4</sup> V I Lenin, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution", *op. cit.*, p 60-61.

AJIT ROY

## *Lessons of the Chilean Experience*

It is an extremely agonizing task for Marxists to reflect critically on the recent Chilean developments so soon after the events, even before the blood of the fallen heroes has fully dried up. But it is a task handed down by the martyrs themselves who died, and are still dying, with the firm belief that their unfinished mission would be carried forward by others, enlightened and inspired by their martyrdom. It was this sense of historical legacy that had prompted Marx to undertake the critical study of the tragic but glorious bid to 'storm heaven' only two days after "the last fighters of the Commune succumbed to superior forces on the slopes of Belleville..."<sup>1</sup> And, indeed the Chilean Communists have demonstrated this proper Marxist spirit by themselves undertaking this challenging task. The underground centre of the Communist Party of Chile and at least one of the Party's leading spokesmen have already come out with important self-critical conclusions. In the interests of the Indian revolution, Marxists should seek to draw appropriate lessons from the struggle and experience of the Chilean comrades to illuminate our own path ahead.

To speak of the critical nature of the present exercise should not lead one to a false notion that the Chilean experiment has yielded only negative results. Quite the contrary. In less than three years of its rule,

the Popular Unity government, headed by the martyred President Salvador Allende, had registered some major advances on the path towards the country's liberation from the stranglehold of US imperialism and towards national regeneration. Through the nationalization of the entrenched US imperialist interests in the vital natural resources sector, through the state takeover of private banks and many strategic industrial installations, through the break up of the large landed estates and a programme of redistribution of land among the poor peasants and sharecroppers—through all these and many other measures of similar character the Popular Unity government had succeeded in ushering in an entirely new phase of the liberation struggle on the American continent.

Such being the direction of its strivings, it can be easily imagined how furiously the American imperialists and their Chilean clients reacted to these progressive undertakings of the Popular Unity government. Not only was a financial blockade of Chile imposed by the US government and the agencies dominated by it, not only attempts were made to prevent the sales abroad of the product of the nationalized copper mines, but terrorist and sabotage activities were planned and carried out on an expanding scale within the country. As President Allende declared at the UN General Assembly earlier this year, between September and November 1970, before his formal installation,

terrorist actions that were planned outside my country took place there ... I have with me the document (presented to the US government by the multinational corporation, the International Telephone & Telegraph Company dated October 1972 that contains the 18-point plan that was talked about. They wanted to strangle us economically, carry out diplomatic sabotage, create panic among the population, and cause social disorder so that when the government lost control, *the armed forces would be driven to eliminate the democratic regime and impose a dictatorship.*<sup>2</sup>

It would appear that the scenario that was eventually followed by counter-revolution was known to the leadership of the Popular Unity alliance in all its details. Why then the tragic failure to counteract and defeat this heinous crime against the Chilean people? Was it then really inevitable, ordained by history? C Rajeswara Rao, CPI's general secretary at least thinks so.

If the progressive forces lost in Chile it is not because of bourgeois illusions. . . but because the odds were against them. There may have been some mistakes in implementing the democratic programme but this cannot be stated as the basic reason for this defeat. *The basic reason lies in the fact that the Allende government was hampered by a lack of majority in the parliament and the traditional dependence on the US economy. The US imperialists actively intervened and used all weapons to upset the Chilean economy and helped reactionaries to stage a military coup.*<sup>3</sup>

V Teitelboim, member of the CC Political Commission of the Chilean Communist Party, apparently thinks otherwise. He says, "one of the bitter

lessons of the Chilean tragedy is that it is necessary to cast aside all illusions of formal 'legality' and constitutional 'prejudices' if they tie the hands of the people while giving free rein to imperialism and reaction. This is self-evident."<sup>4</sup>

The domination of the US imperialists over the Chilean economy and their all-out efforts to help native reaction are basic data in the situation. To cite them, as Rajeswara Rao does, as reasons for the failure of the Chilean progressive forces is tantamount to implying that the struggle for Chile's liberation is eternally doomed to failure.

Rajeswara Rao's plea of a lack of majority in parliament is really a typical specimen of the illusions of legality and constitutional prejudice which the Chilean Communist leader now, belatedly, deplors. The latter goes on to say, "Those in Chile who day in and day out demanded adherence to 'legality' and with casuistry accused the Allende government of violating the Constitution later scrapped the Constitution completely and abrogated the laws with the aid of rockets and shells."<sup>5</sup>

While internal reaction, as we have elsewhere observed, buttressed and guided by US imperialism, the leader of international counter-revolution, threw overboard all constitutional pretences and resorted to all the weapons in its arsenal—ranging from economic and technical sabotage to attempts at armed coups interspersed with murders and attempted murders—the Marxist leaders of the Chilean people continued to swear by 'legality', 'constitutionality', 'legislative procedure' and all the rest of the bourgeois semantic inventory discarded by the Chilean bourgeoisie itself.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, the Marxist leaders of the Popular Unity alliance in Chile nurtured deep-rooted constitutional illusions. President Allende told a seminar held in Santiago in March 1972, "We want to use the bourgeois institutional framework to achieve the changes in economic, political and social fields which the country is demanding and needs and to achieve socialism."<sup>7</sup>

While it is certainly incumbent on revolutionary socialists to utilize all available opportunities within the bourgeois constitutional framework to advance the struggle for socialism, it is wrong and utopian to expect any major success in this direction through the constitutional process alone. That Allende's party suffered from this wrong orientation will be clear from the perspective held out by Carlos Altamirano, general secretary of the Socialist Party, soon after the installation of the new President. Altamirano said:

We also consider it imperative to introduce real changes in the Republic's institutional structures and in the anachronistic administrative mechanisms.

If these changes should not be understood or approved by the reactionary forces, the government would have to submit the final decision to the verdict of the people through *a mechanism foreseen in the political constitution of the state*, namely, the national plebiscite.<sup>8</sup>

Another constituent of the ruling coalition, MAPU, also a Marxist

Party, nurtured the same constitutional illusions. Even after the fascist camp-followers of the US imperialists had shown their hand through vicious and violent assaults against the constitutional government, the party expected to take part in peaceful general election in 1973 and register electoral successes. In a document adopted in early 1973, the MAPU declared:

Nine months away from a national election such as the parliamentary election of 1973 when the political composition of the Congress will be decided, it is evident that this confrontation has the character of a battle of strategic importance in the struggle for power that Chile faces. We have said since December 1971 that the next great battle for power is this general election. The triumph of People's Unity in this confrontation is an advance of major importance in the course of the final battle; it does not definitely resolve the struggle for power in favour of the working class and the people. But there is no doubt that it signifies a major advance.

We have always affirmed that the constitutional character of the People's Government is an important support point for the revolutionary power. To conquer the parliamentary majority and transform the class character of the Chilean state, starting with the existing bourgeois institutions, permits relying on the weight of legality in favour of the public for the important task of the development of the revolution.<sup>9</sup>

For its part, the Chilean Communist Party also shared the same point of view. "At the illegal 10th Congress", says one of the party's ideologues, "we carefully and self-critically studied the records of the 20th Congress of the CPSU... 'Our country', said the Party general secretary Galo Gonzales, 'provides an example suggesting the possibility of changing the present regime by *peaceful, parliamentary means through elections or other means.*' ...It (the 10th Congress) ...formulated policy towards the Party's allies and inferred the possibility of a course which, based on widespread mass struggles, *would obviate civil war in winning political power.*"<sup>10</sup>

These constitutional illusions were apparently based on two principal factors: (i) some specific features of Chilean history and tradition; and (ii) the perspective of a peaceful transition to socialism, unfolded on the rostrum of the 20th Congress of the CPSU and subsequently enshrined in the international Communist documents.

Let us first consider Chilean history and tradition. President Allende expounded these specific features in his speech at the UN General Assembly as follows:

A country of unlimited cultural, religious and *ideological* tolerance... a country with its working class united in a single trade union organization, where universal and secret suffrage is the vehicle of determination of a multi-party regime, with a parliament that has been operating constantly since it was created 160 years ago; where the courts of justice are independent of the executive and where the con-

stitution has been changed only once since 1833, and has almost always been in effect; a country where public life is organized in civilian institutions and where the armed forces are of a proven professional background and *deep democratic spirit*...<sup>11</sup>

Even conceding the relatively progressive features and traditions of the Chilean polity in the Latin American context, one cannot but express one's sense of shock at the praise showered upon the shaky bourgeois democratic setup by a militant Marxist leader of eminence like the late President. This is, however, not to deny the element of truth that is there. Even Régis Debray concedes that "Chile is distinguished by particularism (parliamentary traditions, eclipsed role of the army and secondary importance of agrarian feudalism)".<sup>12</sup>

The ideological tolerance, parliamentary institutions, democratic spirit of the so-called professional army of Chile and so on, however, have not been able as is only natural, to withstand the social tensions generated by accentuating class struggle. Even granting due weight to the specific features of the Chilean situation, the Marxists were guilty of ignoring or seriously underestimating the wider geopolitical context, that is, in the words of Régis Debray, "the determinate structure of the continent as a whole, which is imprisoned completely in the meshes of the imperialist net."<sup>13</sup>

How indeed could the Chilean Marxists have forgotten the fact that not only throughout the entire modern history of Latin America, but particularly since 1964 the lamp of democracy has been systematically snuffed out by the US imperialists—by naked intervention wherever necessary and by utilizing the native 'gorilla' generals wherever possible—in one country of the continent after another? A correspondent of *The Times* (London) recently noted, "In the early months of 1964, the whole of the South American continent was under civilian rule with the exception of Paraguay and Ecuador...In this decade, with the exception of Argentina, Venezuela and Colombia, military regimes are the norm once again."

But a much more fundamental mistake was the obviously naive faith in the Chilean armed forces, the depth of the faith being reflected in the inclusion of the armed forces, top brass in the government obviously with the aim of containing and combating the growingly audacious counter-revolution with their help. The fond hopes about the armed forces maintaining an attitude of sympathy or at least neutrality while gigantic national and international forces were contending for Chile's historical destiny betray a departure from the basic tenets of the Marxist-Leninist science. Lenin characterized all speculations about 'the neutrality of armed forces' as 'hypocritical talk'.<sup>14</sup>

Yet the Chilean Marxists indulged in wishful thinking about the character of the country's armed forces which not only continue to receive military aid from the USA even during the People's Unity regime but also to send its officers for counter-insurgency training in the US base in Panama.

Allende characterized the army as 'the people in uniform'.<sup>15</sup> The MAPU expected the army to maintain at least neutrality as long as the People's Unity government would respect the bourgeois constitutional-legal framework.<sup>16</sup> The Communist Party laid down the basic approach to the army in the political resolution of the 14th Congress held in late 1969. It stated:

We Communists do not take a biased view of the armed forces. They are a state institution, but saying so is not enough to give the right idea about all servicemen. It is quite clear that the armed forces are not an instrument of the people. But neither must they necessarily be an appendage of imperialism and an obsequious servitor of reaction. Hence we Communists must not raise an insurmountable wall between the civilian population and the military in striving to solve the problems of our country.<sup>17</sup>

It was never really a question of the Chilean Communists creating a wall between the armed forces and the people. Exploiting classes at the head of the Chilean state had taken ample care to have systematically done so. Indeed, the Chilean Communist Party's position on the armed forces as stated above is a rejection of the fundamental Marxist position that "standing army and police are the chief instruments of state power."<sup>18</sup>

"Everywhere, in all countries," says Lenin, "the standing army is used not so much against the external enemy as against the internal enemy. Everywhere the standing army has become the weapon of reaction, the servant of capital in its struggle against labour, executioner of the people's liberty."<sup>19</sup>

Through continuous refinement, the methods perfected by the modern state of the exploiting classes have succeeded in transforming the ranks of the standing army — recruited from among the sons of the toiling people — into a soulless and pliant instrument of oppression. This is achieved by keeping them isolated from the people in sequestered military barracks and by crushing their individuality. Under normal circumstances, the armed forces of each and every exploiters' state can be nothing but an obsequious servitor of reaction.

Advancing revolution has to fight most determinedly for the soul of the army if counter-revolutionary conspiracy in blood is to be defeated. As Lenin said:

...unless the revolution *assumes* a mass character and affects troops, there can be no question of serious struggle. That we must work among the troops goes without saying. But we must not imagine that they will come to our side at one stroke, as a result of persuasion or their own convictions...As a matter of fact, the wavering of the troops, which is inevitable in every truly popular movement, leads to a real *fight for the troops* whenever the revolutionary struggle becomes acute... the desperate, frantic struggle for the troops...takes place between the reaction and revolution.<sup>20</sup>

The fundamentally erroneous notions of the Chilean Communists about the path of advancing revolution were, as we have seen from the Party's own admission, derived from the thesis of peaceful transition expounded at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, a thesis that goes against the very essence of the Marxist-Leninist science of revolution.

"Indeed," asks Lenin, "what is revolution from the Marxist point of view?" He answers: "The forcible demolition of the obsolete political superstructure."<sup>21</sup>

On civil war and class struggle he had made it abundantly clear that

He who accepts the class struggle, cannot fail to accept civil wars, which in every class society are the natural, and under certain conditions inevitable, continuation, development and intensification of the class struggle. That has been confirmed by every great revolution. To repudiate civil war, or to forget about it, is to fall into extreme opportunism and renounce the socialist revolution.<sup>22</sup>

The present-day apologists of the peaceful transition consciously or unconsciously distort this kernel of the Marxist-Leninist science of revolution like C Rajeswara Rao who said:

The Communist movement had always declared that armed revolutions are *generally* necessary for basic social transformations. It also stated that in some countries where favourable conditions obtain, opportunities might arise for such transformations without armed insurrections and civil wars and that it is the duty of the Communists to utilize all such occasions.<sup>23</sup>

First of all, the founders of scientific socialism and Lenin did not say that "armed revolutions are *generally* necessary". They taught us that armed revolutions are *universally* necessary. They only speculated about possible exceptions to this universal law. Let us precisely examine their speculative statements on peaceful transformation.

The most quoted lines from Marx's letter to Kugelmann make no direct statement on England or America at all. By confining his statement to the continent of Europe, Marx merely kept the question of revolution in England and America open. Lenin denounced the attempts to seek Marx's blessings for peaceful transition in the following terms:

The argument that Marx in the seventies allowed for the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism in England and America is completely fallacious, or, to put it bluntly, dishonest in that it is juggling with quotations and references. Firstly, Marx regarded it as an exception even then. Secondly, in those days monopoly capitalism, i.e., imperialism, did not exist. Thirdly, in England and America, there was no militarist clique then—as *there is now*—serving as the chief apparatus of the bourgeois state machine.<sup>24</sup>

The most authoritative testimony on Marx's thinking on the question is undeniably provided by Engels who said of Marx as

...a man whose whole theory is the result of a life-long study of the economic history and condition of England, and when that study led to the conclusion that, at least in Europe, England is the only country where the inevitable social revolution might be effected entirely by peaceful and legal means. *He certainly never forgot to add that he hardly expected the English ruling classes to submit without a 'pro-slavery rebellion' to this peaceful and legal revolution.*<sup>25</sup>

About the other co-founder of the science, Engels, Lenin said, "Engels was careful not to tie his hands. He admitted that in republican or very free countries 'one can conceive (only 'conceive') of a peaceful development towards socialism..."<sup>26</sup>

As for Lenin himself, he has always sought to drive the lesson home that "In the long run we know that the problems of social life are resolved by the class struggle in the bitterest and fiercest form—civil war."<sup>27</sup>

Rajeswara Rao further says: "Lenin tried to utilize such an opportunity in the Soviet Union after the overthrow of the Czar..."<sup>28</sup>

First of all, Lenin had not enunciated a perspective of peaceful transition *in advance*. He had merely identified a very short-term possibility, extending over a period of four months and five days only (from February 27 to July 4, 1917). This, he repeatedly emphasized, was a rare phenomenon in history.

Secondly, this had been possible because, Lenin emphasized, "*What really mattered* was that arms were in the hands of the people..."<sup>29</sup>

Thirdly, Lenin said:

Apparently, not all the supporters of the slogan 'All power must be transferred to the Soviets' have given adequate thought to the fact that it was a slogan for peaceful progress of the revolution—peaceful not only in the sense that nobody, no class, no force of any importance, would then (between February 27 and July 4) have been able to resist and prevent the transfer of power to the Soviets. That is not all. Peaceful development would then have been possible, even in the sense that the struggle of the classes and parties *within* Soviets could have assumed a most peaceful and painless form, provided full state power had passed to the Soviets in good time.<sup>30</sup>

In other words, because of arms in the hands of the people *nobody, no class, no force* would have been able to resist and prevent the transfer of power to the Soviets and once full-state power had passed to the Soviets, the struggle of the classes within them could have assumed a peaceful form.

It would certainly be the bounden duty of the revolutionary socialists to seize with both hands any such opportunity that history may offer at any particular juncture for advancing to socialism through peaceful means. But except for a brief four-month period in Russia in 1917, no such opportunity has ever appeared. On the other hand the few occasions beginning from the Spanish experience in the Thirties to the recent tragic events in Chile—in which the first steps towards power were taken

through peaceful and constitutional means—all go to confirm the fact that a progressive government, even if installed through constitutional-electoral process does not and cannot achieve the consolidation of the new regime and the consummation of its projected social transformation through the same process. On the contrary, the initial success of the progressive forces in winning a bridgehead on enemy territory i.e., the control of the government machinery, only provokes and is faced with a ferocious counter-attack by the forces of counter-revolution. "Great revolutions," Lenin has sharply reminded, "even when they commence peacefully, as was the case with the Great French Revolution, end in furious wars which are instigated by counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie... *There can be no peaceful evolution towards socialism.*"<sup>31</sup>

It is not enough to renounce or repudiate the illusions about a parliamentary road to socialism. Revolutionary socialists must extend this to a thorough reappraisal of parliamentarism. Unlike anarcho-syndicalists, Communists, said, Lenin, "regard parliamentarism (participation in representative assemblies) as one of the means of *enlightening* and *educating* the proletariat and *organizing* it in an independent class party; as one of the methods of the political struggle for the emancipation of the workers."<sup>32</sup> Hence, this does not and must not mean that *under normal conditions* Communist parliamentarism should follow the consistent parliamentary path towards the formation of government within the bourgeois state structure. The nominal government is only one of the organs of the state—and usually a secondary one—as the real power of the state rests with the army, police and bureaucracy.

By entering a government, usually in coalition with a number of other parties, many of them non-Marxist or at least not strictly Marxist, the Communists only harm the cause of the revolution. On the one hand, if they do not transform themselves into a full-fledged reformist party (as CPI has done in Kerala), they would inevitably provoke counter-attacks from the Right, which they will not be in a position to fight back as they lack the real power of the state. On the other hand, if they do not go in for a Left adventurist course, they would certainly provoke revolts on the Left, which they should not fight with the governmental instruments within the bourgeois framework. As in all likelihood, they would do neither very consistently, there would be simultaneous attacks from both the Right and the Left, causing great harm to the Party and the people.

In the Twenties and the Thirties, the Communist International devoted considerable attention to the question of Communist participation in government before the overthrow of the bourgeois state power.<sup>33</sup> It arrived at the conclusion that such participation was permissible only under *exceptional, transitional*, circumstances, that is, when the bourgeois state power was in deep crisis and its organs were in a state of near paralysis. In other words, Communist participation in government within the bourgeois state structure is permissible only when there is a possibility of

utilizing the government for further intensifying the struggle and carrying it towards a climax.

Before concluding this brief assessment of the Chilean experiment, mention should be made of two secondary but important aspects of the development.

First, it is also necessary to examine if the Chilean Marxists had not committed the Left-sectarian mistake of blurring over the distinction between the democratic-national liberation phase and the socialist phase. The political resolution of the 13th Congress of the Chilean Communist Party, held in 1965, had clearly demarcated the two distinct phases.<sup>34</sup> But one has not come across any such demarcation in the resolution of the 14th Congress or the few later documents available.

Secondly, the nationalization measures carried out by the Popular Unity government were, it appears, marked by a distinct trend of bureaucratization. The government failed to evolve a new pattern of management by and for associating the workers and so failed to activate the potential mass bases, created by the measures themselves.<sup>35</sup>

The Chilean experience has once more highlighted how difficult it has become to lead a revolution to success under the present circumstances. On the world plane, the revolutionary forces today are incomparably stronger than ever before. Imperialism today is undoubtedly in the throes of a deep economic, political and moral crisis. But crisis, as Lenin has repeatedly warned, does not automatically lead to the downfall of the bourgeoisie. Subjective factors like leadership, organization and revolutionary wisdom are no less important.

The two recent bids for a revolutionary transformation in Latin American countries, one led by Che in Bolivia and the other by Allende in Chile, experimented with two radically different paths and both came to grief.

Then there is also the Indonesian experience.

These developments should lead all sincere Marxists to devote their deepest thoughts to the question of mechanics (or more correctly, dialectics) of revolution in the present era.

While paying our most respectful homage to the highest revolutionary integrity of the leaders of the revolutionary masses in these countries, who staked their lives and paid the highest penalty for the failure of their heroic bids, we deeply ponder over the invaluable lessons of their failure.

*(This paper was read at the Indian School of Social Sciences (Calcutta) seminar, Chile and the Parliamentary Road to Socialism, on November 28, 1973.)*

<sup>1</sup> F Engels, 'Introduction' to Karl Marx, *Civil War in France*.

<sup>2</sup> *Tri-continental*, No 83, 1973, Havana; emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup> *New Age*, November 4, 1973, New Delhi; emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup> *New Times*, No 42, October 1973, Moscow; emphasis added.

<sup>5</sup> V Teitelboim, *Ibid*.

- <sup>6</sup> Editorial in *The Marxist Review*, October-November 1973.
- <sup>7</sup> Quoted in *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 15, 1973.
- <sup>8</sup> *Tri-continental*, October-November 1971; emphasis added.
- <sup>9</sup> *Tri-continental*, No 82, 1973; emphasis added.
- <sup>10</sup> Jorge Texier, *Political Affairs*, October 1972, New York; emphasis added.
- <sup>11</sup> *Tri-continental*, No 83, 1973.
- <sup>12</sup> *Socialist Digest*, June 1968, Bombay.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p 14, reprinted in *The Statesman*, October 6, 1973, Calcutta.
- <sup>14</sup> V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 10, p 55.
- <sup>15</sup> Reprinted from *Granma* in *The Marxist Review*, September 1971.
- <sup>16</sup> *Tri-continental*, No 82, 1973.
- <sup>17</sup> *Information Bulletin*, Nos 1-2, 1970, Prague.
- <sup>18</sup> V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 25, p 389.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 10, p 56.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 11, p 174; emphasis in the original.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 9, p 128.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 23, pp 78-79.
- <sup>23</sup> *New Age*, *op. cit.*, emphasis added.
- <sup>24</sup> V I Lenin, *op. cit.*, Vol 28, p 108, emphasis in the original.
- <sup>25</sup> F Engels, "Preface" to Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol 1; emphasis added.
- <sup>26</sup> V I Lenin, *op. cit.*, Vol 25, p 444.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p 201.
- <sup>28</sup> *New Age*, *op. cit.*
- <sup>29</sup> V I Lenin, *op. cit.*, Vol 25, p 183; emphasis in the original.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p 184; emphasis in the original.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 29, p 363; emphasis added.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 11, p 277; emphasis added.
- <sup>33</sup> See *An Outline History of the Communist International*, Moscow, pp 178-9 and *From Peace Front to Civil War*, People's Publishing House, Bombay, pp 133-4.
- <sup>34</sup> See "Luis Corvalan's Report to the 13th Congress of the Communist Party of Chile", *Information Bulletin*, Prague No 31, 1965.
- <sup>35</sup> See "The Self-criticism by the 5th National Plenary of MAPU", *Tri-continental*, No 82, 1973.

SATTENDRA NARAYAN MAZUMDAR

## *Chile and the Question of Peaceful Transition to Socialism*

IT is not correct to speak of a parliamentary road to socialism. The road to socialism lies through class struggle.

The correct posure of the question should be: how far, to what extent and under what specific historical circumstances can parliament be utilized for the advancement and victory of that struggle.

An impression is prevalent among some people that the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union spoke of a parliamentary road to socialism. But that is not correct. What the 20th Congress did was to examine the question whether it is possible to go over to socialism by using parliamentary means: it came to the conclusion that in the changed historical conditions of the post-war period the possibility has arisen in some capitalist countries of utilizing parliamentary means in the transition to socialism. But this formulation has nothing in common with the social-democratic concept of the parliamentary road to socialism.

The 20th Congress took note of the fact that the historical situation has undergone radical changes which make possible a new approach to the question of transition to socialism and declared:

The present situation offers the working class in a number of capitalist countries a new opportunity to unite the overwhelming majority of the people under its leadership and to secure the transfer of the basic

means of production into the hands of the people. The right-wing bourgeois parties and their governments are suffering bankruptcy with increasing frequency. In these circumstances the working class, by rallying around itself the toiling peasantry, the intelligentsia, all patriotic forces, and resolutely repulsing the opportunist elements who are incapable of giving up the policy of compromise with the capitalists and landlords, is in a position to defeat the reactionary forces opposed to the popular interest, to capture a stable majority in parliament, and transform the latter from an organ of bourgeois democracy into a genuine instrument of people's will. In such an event this institution, traditional in many highly developed capitalist countries, may become an organ of genuine democracy, democracy for the working people.

The winning of a stable parliamentary majority backed by a mass revolutionary movement of the proletariat and of all working people could create for the working class of a number of capitalist and former colonial countries the conditions needed to secure fundamental social changes. In the countries where capitalism is still strong and has a huge military and political apparatus at its disposal, the reactionary forces will of course inevitably offer serious resistance. There the transition to socialism will be attended by a sharp class, revolutionary struggle.

Whatever the form of transition to socialism, the decisive and indispensable factor is the political leadership of the working class headed by its vanguard. Without this there can be no transition to socialism.

If the above declaration is studied without any preconceived idea and prejudice it is evident that this formulation cannot by any means be equated with the social democratic concept or with parliamentarism in the generally understood sense of the term.

The concept of the possibility to utilize parliament for the transition to socialism formulated by the 20th Congress of the CPSU was described as the possibility of the peaceful transition to socialism. Both the right revisionist and the left-sectarian trends in the international Communist movement seized upon these words "peaceful transition to socialism" out of the context in order to distort the very essence of the above concept. But it is evident that (a) peaceful transition read in the above context does not mean abandonment of the class struggle, nor does it imply the possibility of utilizing the parliamentary means without the backing of a mass revolutionary movement of all the working people under the leadership of the proletariat; (b) the formulation of the 20th Congress does not absolutize the possibility of a peaceful transition for all capitalist countries nor does it absolutize this possibility under all circumstances.

The formulation of the 20th Congress was further elaborated and strengthened by the international conferences of the Communist Parties held in 1957 and 1961. There were certain weaknesses in the formulations of the 20th Congress. These were removed in the formulations of the 1957

and 1961 conferences of the 12 Communist Parties and 81 Communist Parties.

The declaration of the 81 Communist Parties issued by the conference held in 1961 states:

Today in a number of capitalist countries the working class, headed by its vanguard, has the opportunity, given a united working class and popular front on other workable forms of agreement and political cooperation between the different parties and organizations, to unite a majority of the people, win state power without civil war and ensure the transfer of the basic means of production to the hands of the people. Relying on the majority of the people and resolutely rebuffing the opportunist elements incapable of relinquishing the policy of compromise with the capitalists and landlords, the working class can defeat the reactionary anti-popular forces, secure a firm majority in parliament, transform parliament from an instrument serving the class interests of the bourgeoisie into an instrument serving the working people, launch an extra-parliamentary mass struggle, smash the resistance of the reactionary forces and create the necessary conditions for peaceful realization of the socialist revolution. All this will be possible only by broad and ceaseless development of the class struggle of the workers, peasant masses and the urban middle strata against big monopoly capital, against reaction, for profound social reforms, for peace and socialism. In the event of the exploiting classes resorting to violence against the people, the possibility of non-peaceful transition to socialism should be borne in mind. Leninism teaches, and experience confirms, that the ruling classes never relinquish power voluntarily. In this case the degree of bitterness and the forms of class struggle will depend not so much on the proletariat as on the resistance put up by the reactionary circles to the will of the overwhelming majority of the people, on these circles using force at one or another stage of the struggle for socialism.

The actual possibility of one or the other way to socialism in each individual country depends on the concrete historical conditions.

The above formulation does not absolutize the possibility of peaceful transition to socialism in any country. It speaks of the possibility, not the inevitability, of peaceful transition. It outlines the tasks essential for translating the above possibility into practice. At the same time it points out the necessity of being prepared to meet the other possibility, namely, that of non-peaceful transition under certain circumstances.

Absolutization of the possibility of peaceful transition under all circumstances leads to (a) lack of vigilance about the counter-offensive from the side of the reactionary forces; (b) underestimation of the capacity of resistance by the forces of reaction; and consequently to (c) neglect of the task of developing class struggle.

On the other hand, the dogmatic rejection of the possibility of peaceful transition leads either to the absolutization of the armed form of

struggle irrespective of the concrete historical conditions of the given country or to a lack of perspective and in practice confining the movement of the working people within the limits of the struggle for partial demands only.

It is true that the possibility of peaceful transition to socialism has not yet materialized in any country. But it is also undeniable that the absolutization of the armed form of struggle irrespective of the concrete historical conditions has resulted in serious setbacks and grave harm to the revolutionary movement in many countries.

There is a trend which does not absolutize the armed form of struggle, recognizes the possibility and necessity of utilizing parliamentary institutions to a certain extent but rejects the concept of the possibility of peaceful transition. This trend leads itself into a blind alley. It wants to utilize parliamentary institutions but has no clear perspective of the tasks. It fails to equip the movement of the working class and the working people with a well-defined plan of action. This results in the left-sectarian neglect of the task of building a broad united front. Moreover, this trend leaves the initiative in the hands of the forces of reaction.

The concept of the possibility of utilizing parliamentary institutions for transition to socialism is not something totally new, invented by the 20th Congress of the C P S U. This concept arose and took shape out of the historical experience of the international Communist movement. The different trends discussed above are also not new to the international Communist movement.

The Fourth Congress of the Communist International held in 1922 while elaborating the tactics of the united proletarian front, examined the possibility of creating workers' government: this followed directly from the tactics of the united front, making it easier to draw the masses into struggle. The Congress declared that it should be regarded as a possible form of transition to the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Fourth Congress of the Communist International regarded this slogan as an expression of the united front of all the working people and a coalition of all the workers' parties in the economic and political fields to fight bourgeois rule and to achieve its ultimate overthrow. The Fourth Congress also recognized the possibility that a workers' government could arise on a parliamentary basis too, but only in close connection with the revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie, only in the course of the mass struggle, given the backing of the masses and an intensified revolutionary movement.<sup>1</sup>

This question again came up as a practical possibility in the mid-thirties, during the period of the anti-fascist united front and people's front movement. With the growing strength of the labour and Communist movement in a number of capitalist countries, conditions arose under which parliamentary forms of struggle could play a greater part than ever before in organizing a rebuff to fascism and reaction. Drawing attention to these possibilities the Seventh Congress of the Communist

International developed the policy of the Communist Parties towards parliament under conditions of a general democratic struggle.

Georgi Dimitrov discussed this question in detail in his report to the Seventh Congress of the Communist International and said :

If we Communists are asked whether we advocate the united front only in the struggle for partial demands, or whether we are prepared to share the responsibility even when it will be a question of forming a government on the basis of the united front, then we say with a full sense of our responsibility : Yes, we recognize that a situation may arise in which the formation of a government of the proletarian united front, or the anti-fascist people's front, will become not only possible but necessary in the interests of the proletariat.

Dimitrov also analysed the character of the reformist as well as left-sectarian mistakes on this question.

The above-mentioned historical experience of the world Communist movement was assimilated and brought up-to-date in the Declaration of the 81 Communist Parties in 1961.

Chile was the first country where, within a decade after the 1961 Declaration, the popular forces came to power in a perfectly constitutional way, by scoring an electoral victory. The government of the Popular Unity Bloc headed by President Allende has been overthrown by a fascist coup three years after it came to power. The experience of Chile should be studied dispassionately and objectively without any preconceived and foregone conclusion.

It is undeniable that the victory of the Popular Unity Bloc in Chile in the presidential election of 1970 and the formation of a government headed by President Allende ushered in a new and qualitatively higher stage in the struggle of the people of Chile. The government energetically began a programme of anti-imperialist and anti-oligarchic transformations. This, the government of the Popular Unity Bloc did in the face of acute and ceaseless confrontation with the forces of internal reaction aided by US imperialism from the very beginning of its existence.

The 1970 election victory did not give the Popular Unity Bloc absolute political and economic power. The majority in the Chilean parliament, the National Congress, was commanded by the rightists who continued to flout the will of the people. The positions of the oligarchy were undermined but not destroyed. It possessed considerable material resources and many enterprises, controlled most of the newspapers, journals, radio stations, and mass media for ideological subversion. These are some examples of the difficulties that confronted the government of President Allende.

Despite obstacles, the government of the Popular Unity Bloc has to its credit considerable achievement in anti-imperialist and anti-oligarchic transformation: government control of monopoly enterprises, abolition of the *latifundia* and solution of the agrarian problem, nationalization of the copper, sulphur and iron mines, reduction of unemployment and rise in

working-class incomes, all these are part of the popular government's record. These were gains won in battle.

The popular forces were quite aware of the need to be strong enough to curb the counter-offensive of reaction. It found itself faced with the task common to all popular revolutions, a fundamental reconstruction of the entire structure of law and power. This is evident from the speech of Luis Corvalan at the 24th Congress of the C P S U. In fact, the counter-offensive launched by the reactionary forces in June 1973 was defeated with popular support. The people and the army defended the government.

Yet the government of the Popular Unity Bloc has been overthrown by the reactionary military coup in September and Chile has passed, for the time being at least, under a fascist regime. We do not know as yet what weaknesses were displayed and what mistakes were committed by the Popular Unity Bloc and its constituent parties. When fuller information is available it should be thoroughly studied and analysed in order to assess the achievements and the weaknesses or failures of the Chilean experiment.

The temporary defeat of the Chilean Revolution cannot be used as a pretext to pass a final judgement on the experiment. The resistance of the popular forces is growing. For the time being, at least this much can be said that the achievements of the Popular Unity Bloc government helped to extend the mass base of the revolution. This made it possible to organize resistance against the fascist junta so quickly.

As for the theoretical conclusions which can be drawn at this stage about the possibility of the peaceful transition to socialism, on the basis of the available information; it would be appropriate to quote the words of a Soviet author written in 1972:

The peaceful road to socialism is not straight. Peaceful progress to socialism is accompanied by crises, spontaneous uprisings of the people, acute confrontations between the forces of democracy and reaction, the entry of the army on the political scene and sudden changes in the political weather.

Acute crises, advances, retreats and detours on the road of the relatively peaceful and gradual approach and transition to socialism pose countless complicated problems whose solution is no less difficult than the solution of the problems of armed struggle.<sup>2</sup>

*(This was a paper presented at the seminar on Chile and the Parliamentary Road to Socialism held on November 28, 1973, under the auspices of the Indian School of Social Sciences, Calcutta.)*

<sup>1</sup> *An Outline History of the Communist International*, Progress Publishers, Moscow.

<sup>2</sup> V Krasin, *The Dialectics of Revolutionary Process*, Novosty Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow 1972.

HARIHARAN POONJAR

*Materialism and the 'Mysteries'*

IF there is any real mystery in the universe, it is about matter itself. There is no mystery *behind* the universe. The concept of mystery arises out of the contradiction between knowledge and ignorance. One cannot think of a condition of absolute knowledge, the so-called omniscience of the idealists. The greater the perception of reality by the human mind, the greater is the awareness about what is left to be known. This is true both about microcosmic and macrocosmic reality. The inward infinity of the atom and the outward infinity of the universe are equally baffling.

No wonder that new vistas of research are always opening up in cosmology and atomic physics. The cosmological consequences of Einstein's theory of gravitation are today confronting the physicists and the philosophers. They are confronted with unusually new and involved physical relationships in understanding the universe. No one thought of gravitational waves before Einstein. Today no scientist doubts their existence. The two competing theories about the origin of the universe, the Big Bang theory and the Steady State theory are adding to our wonders. And now scientists talk about black holes (dead stars) in the universe which can never be known because they do not let out any radiation. Einstein had even proposed the concept of a finite but limitless universe! If the matter in the universe is distributed in a more or less

uniform manner, no expedition will ever face a hindrance and it will go round and round in a gravitationally curved space.

While all these show that the material universe is not an open book, they do not confirm the mysteries of the mystics and idealist philosophers. On the contrary they do confirm the concepts of dialectical materialism. Not only are the idealists disproved, but the views of mechanical materialists stand negated.

Accepting that human knowledge has its internal dialectics of growth, it would be wrong to consider it as an autonomous phenomenon. It is inseparably linked with the growth of the historical practice of man as a social being. It is man, the highest product of material evolution on this planet, who creates this knowledge. Human existence has its social dialectics. So, in order to understand why philosophy has taken the path it has, we must look back and trace the determinant class factors. The emergence on the historical scene of the working class, it will be seen, has basically helped the crystallization of the materialist philosophy.

Materialist philosophy could not have advanced but for the emergence of the industrial and scientific revolutions. Marx and Engels were fully alive to the philosophical consequences of science in their days and so was Lenin. They defended dialectical materialism against the corrupt influence of both the idealists and the mechanical materialists. Each time there was an advance in science, both sought to interpret it in a manner that buttressed their respective positions. One of the consequences was the emergence of logical positivism which denied that real knowledge was possible. To avoid confusion Lenin went ahead and defined matter as a philosophical category. This he had to do because the discovery of electrons, protons and so on showed the discrete character of the atoms which led some philosophers to argue that matter had disappeared. Elementary particle physics is adding more challenging ideas today to the concept of matter. But the concept of matter cannot be replaced by any other.

### *Dialectical Materialism*

Apart from the revolution in the natural sciences and technological applications of natural laws which showed the great possibility of transforming nature, the emergence of the proletariat as a new class in history paved the way for the fruition of all earlier progressive materialist tendencies into dialectical materialism. Marx's study of the concrete social contradictions led to his rejection of Hegel's idealist errors, and Engels's study of the condition of the working class in England revealed to him the determinative role of material being in the life of society.

The proletariat is the child of the scientific-industrial revolution. The fundamentally new role the proletariat has to play in history, unlike all the earlier classes that played a progressive role in the various stages of history, is that it does not wish to substitute one form of exploitation for another. Its liberation would mean the end of all exploitation of man by

man. This means that the interests of the proletariat as a class is in total identity with the interests of all mankind which are essentially determined by the materiality of existence. In other words, the proletariat as a class has no inhibitions in accepting materialism. Not only that, its liberation as an emerging historical reality cannot be fully achieved without its acceptance of the materialist philosophy. Besides, being a revolutionary class—a class that objectively seeks to bring about changes in all directions—it has to master the laws of motion, both of nature and society, and apply the mechanics of this motion in liberating itself and building a new world. These factors inevitably led to the development of dialectical materialism and it was not accidental that the leaders of the proletariat had to be its progenitors. The proletariat as a new class in history organizing itself and fighting for power needs dialectical materialism for its onward march.

Bourgeois rationalism has its built-in class limitations. While the bourgeoisie needed the natural sciences in developing the capitalist mode of production, it was never prepared to apply the rigours of the scientific method of analysis to society itself, for it would have shown the historically transient character of capitalism and the inevitable proletarian revolution. However rigorous their techniques may be, bourgeois economists, sociologists and philosophers ultimately betray their class limitations. The rationalist movement all over the world led by the bourgeois intellectuals confines itself to atheistic propaganda, while Marxist philosophers insist that without revolutionary activity to change society nothing positive can be achieved even in the fight against theism. The failure of a rigorous logician like Bertrand Russell, a rationalist all his life, to recognize the irrationality of the capitalist system shows the failure of bourgeois rationalism. Philosophically too Russell ended up in scepticism and positivism. His evolution was from objective to subjective idealism.

Dialectical materialism is a weapon in the hands of the proletariat. Realizing this the bourgeoisie uses religious beliefs, mysticism and the occult to disarm philosophically backward sections of the proletariat and other working people. In countries like India with deep-rooted traditions of mysticism and occult practices, the task is easier for the vested interests. There are sections of the ruling classes who really believe in these cults and practices and there are others who do this to detract the oppressed from the path of class struggle guided by dialectical materialism.

The proletariat can neither ignore nor underestimate this threat to its philosophy. While its basic historical task is to unite the oppressed classes on the basis of their economic demands and political interests, this task itself cannot be fully carried out without a philosophical and cultural offensive as part of the day-to-day struggle. This offensive, of course, will not be an isolated cultural movement like that of the rationalists. This is because those who isolate themselves from the working-class movement end up in the camp of mechanical materialism. Similarly those who

isolate themselves from the rapidly advancing modern science end up in idealism. Genuine dialectical materialism emerges and develops when both these deviations are fought.

### *Enrichment by Science*

The rapidly developing insight of scientists into the structure of matter in its microscopic and macroscopic levels should be dialectically understood. Materialist philosophy will always remain the only true philosophy, but it has to be continually enriched by analysing and integrating it with the philosophical consequences of modern science. In fact recent researches have given the physicist greater understanding of matter, an understanding which has further disproved mechanical materialists and idealists alike.

Mechanical materialists failed to appreciate that matter is always in motion and motion is in fact inseparable from it. The assumption that matter-in-motion is the only eternal reality has been conclusively proved by modern sciences, especially physics. At the micro level, namely, in the physics of elementary particles, efforts are being made to penetrate deeper into the essence of things and reach a new level in the structure of matter. This is done through a reconstruction of physical concepts for establishing a correspondence with specific manifestations of objective reality at a more fundamental level. Efforts are now being made by physicists to develop a physical theory of space and time in respect of microphenomena. Probing the mysteries of the microworld, scientists find that the traditional method of visualizing the unknown and inaccessible—so far as measurements go—in images and concepts of what is known and accessible to pictorial interpretation is not quite helpful. They find that the characteristics of space and time developed as a result of observing the macrophenomena are not quite helpful in understanding the microworld. This is because nature, though unitary in its materiality, is not really uniform. Uniformity of the structure of the universe is considered an oversimplification. As S T Melyukhin says: "Experience points to a qualitative inhomogeneity of properties and laws of motion at different levels of its structural organization, and this inhomogeneity and diversity must also be inherent in space and time, as the most important forms of existence of matter."

The dialectical materialist position that space and time are in fact properties of matter in its various levels of motion is now confirmed by modern physics too. There is nothing like matter being 'immersed' in space. If one separates space-time from matter, it runs counter to material monism. Space and time are among the universal properties or attributes of matter. Structure, extension and the order of co-existence of bodies appear as spatial attributes, while the duration of existence, the sequence of change of states and cause-and-effect relations appear as the time of its existence. Understanding motion alone can reveal the secrets of matter, its different levels of structural organization and interaction. It is also

necessary to understand the noncreatability or nondestructibility of matter and motion. Eternalness is a property of nature as a whole, not of specific entities which have a beginning and end in time. Matter exists by itself. It is neither created nor destroyed. There is really no need to think of a creator as religious believers do.

Matter is inexhaustible in its structure and the variety of its possible internal states is infinite. It is because of the infinite possibilities and potentialities of matter that Lenin defined it as a 'philosophical category.' Science deals with concrete forms of matter that can be perceived. Perception includes all that is known and being known through scientific experimentation with the aid of sophisticated tools as well. Matter cannot in fact be studied outside its concrete forms. Substances are formed out of matter-in-motion. Ordinarily we come into contact with substances only in a solid, liquid or gaseous state. But the most widespread state of substance in the universe is plasma, a gaseous state consisting of electrically charged particles—electrons and ions. The stars, nebulae and interstellar gases are in a state of plasma.

What is to be noted is that man's knowledge of matter or substances may undergo changes as science advances, but the definition of matter in materialist philosophy remains valid for all time. *The philosophical definition of matter can go wrong only if it can be shown that there are nonmaterial phenomena in the universe.* Some idealists or spiritualists may mistake a phenomenon inexplicable (for the time being), especially when it refers to the human mind or to the sphere of consciousness or personal experience in general, as non-material. As M Rosenthal and P Yudin observe:

The dialectical materialistic understanding of matter differs from the metaphysical one in that according to the former matter is considered not only as existing objectively, as independent of man's consciousness, but also as inseparably connected with motion, time and space, as capable of self-development, as infinite both quantitatively and qualitatively in all scales of its existence.<sup>1</sup>

Lenin had to fight against the metaphysical distortions of the concept of matter by some scientists and philosophers in the wake of the discoveries of the atomic particles. Ernst Mach, the Austrian physicist and idealist philosopher (1838-1916) had several followers in Russia who attempted to revise dialectical materialism. The so-called crisis in physics emerged around the turn of the century because with the discovery of indefinable particles the idealists argued that matter has disappeared. The Machists and revisionists claimed that the new physics had refuted materialism and it was Lenin's philosophical task in his brilliant book *Materialism And Empirio-Criticism* to fight this distortion. Lenin showed that new epistemological conclusions could emerge from the new discoveries in physics, but they would never dispense with the basic concept of matter itself. An eminent French physicist Henri Poincare (1854-1912) even went to the extent of arguing that it is not nature which imposes on (or dictates to) us the concepts of space and time, but we who impose

them on nature and "whatever is not thought is pure nothing".<sup>2</sup> This sort of idealism has not died down and still continues to be propagated by several bourgeois scientists and philosophers.

### *Concept of Time*

At the same time, as recognized by dialectical materialism, man's knowledge of the secrets of matter is improving. This new knowledge which refers to the microworld is giving rise to contradictory theorizations too. There is an effort to deny the irreversibility of time, for instance. The continuity of time is rejected; it is argued that all concrete entities exist in finite time and, consequently, time would appear to be built up from a discrete sequence of periods of existence of individual bodies. This argument is rejected by the Soviet physicist S T Melyukhin, who says:

During the existence of a body, its basic quality can persist, and this means that time here is continuous. If we regard qualitative transitions, it will be seen that they too fail to lead to a general discreteness of time. After an object has ceased to exist as a given quality, the matter that composes it is not destroyed, but only passes from one quality into another, which means that it continues to exist. It is only the time of existence of concrete qualitative states that appears to be discrete, while matter in all its possible forms exists continuously. But since matter always exists in definite qualitative forms, real time proves to be a unity of continuity and discontinuity.<sup>3</sup>

It is, therefore, necessary to accept the one-dimensionality or the irreversibility of time. Melyukhin adds:

One-dimensionality is manifested as a sequence of temporal changes that is possible only in the form of a linear order in one dimension, unlike, for example, the three-dimensionality of possible spatial displacements of solids. Irreversibility is manifested in the movement of time from past to future.<sup>4</sup>

This is because of the existence of cause-and-effect relations and the conservation laws. Without definite causes, which must possess existence in a region of the actual world, no phenomenon can originate. The causes refer to the present though they are displaced continuously towards the future along the axis of time. Future events do not possess the quality of being in the present phenomena. Similarly neither the present nor the future can affect an accomplished past, though the past affects the future.

The concept of time like that of space is fundamental. Though in our normal experience the direction of change of time from past to future is deduced as a consequence of increasing entropy because it varies uniquely with time, time is a universal form of being of matter. It expresses duration and sequence of all variations and classes of interaction. Even in a thermodynamically closed system in which all processes are directed at establishing a statistical equilibrium, and therefore in which entropy will not be able to increase, there will have to be motions of molecules, atoms and elementary particles, which are not determined by

the second law of thermodynamics. Further, the interaction with cosmic radiation or the gravitational field neutrinos and the like is also unavoidable. These variations are indestructible. What, therefore, happens is that entropy coincides with the direction of time.

However, there are other Soviet physicists like Y P Terletsky who consider that the causality principle does not have any absolute validity as far as microscopic phenomena are concerned. According to him the directionality of the flow of time is accounted for by the law of increasing entropy and since this is a macroscopic phenomenon, "from the stand of the microscopic reversibility of elementary processes there is no ground for regarding the principle of causality as some special absolute physical law, and it may be replaced by the second law of thermodynamics (or regarded as a consequence of the second law)."<sup>5</sup> There are other interesting ideas being advanced by Terletsky. He points out that the concept of the negation of the negation is constantly at work in physics. There are also a number of repetition concepts. The corpuscular, undulatory, and again corpuscular theories of light; the kinetic, phenomenological, and again kinetic theories of heat; the relativity principle of Galileo, the fixed aether of Lorentz, and again the relativity of Einstein are examples.

Fred Hoyle, the Cambridge astronomer, had advanced the concept of creation of matter 'out of nothing'. R P Feynman had advanced the concept of a positron being an electron moving backward in time. Accordingly J V Narlikar, collaborator of Hoyle, had argued that time could take a reverse flow. This concept of reverse flow of time was necessary in order to sustain Hoyle's theory of creation of matter 'out of nothing'. But in 1961 Hoyle gave up this idea of creation of matter out of nothing and allowed for the existence of a certain creating field at the expense of which particles are produced in space to maintain the mean density of matter in the process of the expansion of the metagalaxy. The concept of the antiworld is also advanced to show that a reverse flow of time is possible. But according to Melyukhin :

All antiparticles obey the principle of causality and the conservation laws and develop in the conventional flow of time. The transition of particles to antiparticles in charge conjugation does not in the least signify a conversion of time backwards in physical processes. The laws of the structural organization and development of matter of the 'anti-world' should be similar to the laws of our world, and the flow of time should be the same.<sup>6</sup>

It is said that contact between matter and antimatter would lead to the 'annihilation' of both. Western philosophical and physical literature often employ terms such as 'annihilation of matter', 'materialization of energy' etc. Such incorrect expressions might give the impression that matter can be reduced to 'nothing' or that matter can be created out of 'pure' motion. According to E J Parnov,

Such conclusions stem from an incorrect definition of matter. Some philosophers and physicists regard as matter only those of its forms

which are characterized by rest mass; in this case photons and neutrons are not 'matter'...In reality the new discoveries of physics have served to reemphasize how right Lenin was when he pointed out that expressions such as 'matter disappears', 'matter is reduced to electricity', etc. are no more than epistemologically helpless reactions to the discovery of new forms of matter and material motion and the realization that the old forms can be reduced to the new ones.<sup>7</sup>

The advances in physics which have brought to light new elementary particles and new forms of motion such as nuclear processes, annihilation, etc. go to reaffirm the basic materialist premises. Annihilation involves reciprocal transmutations of elementary particles, which show that there can be no absolute distinction between various forms of matter. In certain conditions one form of existence of matter can turn into another. Some of the ancient thinkers and the medieval alchemists too had this awareness, but they lacked the scientific instruments to reach the level of nuclear processes. Since all the experiments of the alchemists did not touch the nucleus they could do nothing by way of transforming one metal into another. This would also mean that some of the so-called materializations of matter by our 'miracle men' are false. They are performing either sleight-of-hand tricks of creating illusions or hallucinations.

There is conceivably no end to the vistas of science. The new discoveries may lead to controversies too about the behaviour of matter at the microscopic and the macroscopic levels. But none of our new knowledge can lead to a position where matter disappears. Matter is objective and exists independent of our consciousness of it. But this objectivity is not a mechanical objectivity. It is a dynamic one. So also is our consciousness of it. Observations may have their limitation depending on time, space, means of observation and so forth. That does not make what is observed false. The finitude of knowledge may clash with the infinitude of reality. This means that there is a dialectical tension between knowledge and reality. Each stage in the advancement of science takes this conflict to a higher level. Lenin's classic philosophical formulation stands good for all time:

Materialism in general recognizes objectively real being (matter) as independent of the consciousness, sensation, experience etc. of humanity. Historical materialism recognizes social being as independent of the social consciousness of humanity. In both cases consciousness is only the reflection of being, at best an approximately true (adequate, perfectly exact) reflection of it. From this Marxist philosophy, which is cast from a single piece of steel, you cannot eliminate one basic premise, one essential part, without departing from objective truth, without falling a prey to bourgeois-reactionary falsehood.<sup>8</sup>

Even when the material unity of everything is understood and appreciated, problems are not simple when one deals with human consciousness and its dynamically intricate ways of functioning. Mind, as

Marx had noted, is the highest product of matter and it is as vast in its interiors as is outer space itself. The function of reflection of external reality, which is mind's main function, is not a simple, direct process. The potentialities of the mind too are vast and they are realized through a variety of ways and factors of education, specialization and conditioning make it difficult for an individual, however brilliant he may be, to develop all his mental potentialities. Even the so-called 'mystical' powers of a yogi, achieved through special efforts of concentration, psychic direction and so on are inherent powers of the human mind and have nothing immaterial about them. The contribution of Pavlov in developing the physiology of the higher nervous system, which is denoted by the term mind, the latest discoveries in the brain sciences, and the decoding of the DNA molecule, which contains built-in messages in the form of a material ordering of chemicals on the development of a living organism, etc. have thrown light on the so-called mysteries. It is, therefore, not necessary as some mechanical materialists have done, to deny the dynamism and special potentialities of the mind, in order to sustain the materialist position. The potentialities of hypnosis were known for quite some time and the illusions and hallucinations that the hypnotist could create could not disprove materialism. *Our concept of materiality has become deeper and more complex.*

### *Militant Materialism*

One of the reasons for the continued hold of metaphysical ideas on man is the deep-rooted influence of old ingrained habits. The human mind has been conditioned by the 'realities' of gross experience. The unconditioning, as Pavlov had pointed out, is a very long process. A blind belief is a conditioned reflex sustained by generations of behaviour. Even scientists who know that there can be no conceivable basis for such beliefs having failed to uncondition themselves of these beliefs, behave like any other superstitious man when it comes to practice. That is why we have physicists who look for horoscopes before a daughter's marriage or engineers who look for good omens to start the construction of a bridge. Knowledge does not become wisdom unless its logical implications are assimilated by the man who knows. The process of assimilation, and the consequent modification of behaviour, is a complex process. For most people this can be achieved through a substantial modification in the environments of life. That is why Marx and Engels never advocated a rationalist programme to fight superstition and metaphysics. It should also go on simultaneously as stressed by Lenin when he wrote about 'militant materialism.'

It is also true that some rationalists err on the side of dogmatism. They fail to see that even in the worst dogma or superstitious belief there can be an element of truth. This is confirmed by epistemology and the history of science. Discussing this error Lenin had said:

Error is not the absolute antithesis of truth. As very many philosophers have already claimed, it is not positive, on the contrary, it is

negative and partial, it is in a sense a lesser truth. In ridding it—thanks to experience—of the subjective that it involves, we progressively approach the truth. Once the truth has been reached, it is in the full sense of the word absolute and a limit, for it is objective necessary and universal. However, this limit is far removed from us in almost all cases. It appears to us almost like a mathematical limit, which one approaches closer and closer without ever being able to reach. The history of science, moreover shows us the truth in the *becoming* of development; *the truth is not yet formed, but is rather in the process of formation*. Perhaps it never will be formed, but it will always be more and more formed.<sup>9</sup>

This would mean that there is an element of truth even in every primitive belief. There were ancient civilizations which had considerable scientific knowledge at their disposal. However, they had their historical limitations. In the slave or feudal periods, in the absence of powerdriven machinery and engines as in our industrial civilization with its powerful productive forces, technology was at a lower stage of development, and as such the scientific practice itself was at a very low stage of development. Even then, some ancient civilizations had remarkable discoveries to their credit. As E J Parnov points out:

electric dry batteries were made hundreds of years before Christ and coins struck in 235 B C contain nickel. The serially joined batteries from the cesspools of ancient Baghdad can be seen in the museum. Incidentally, for a long time they were regarded as curious ritual objects. It was pure chance that an engineer who happened to visit the museum realized the real purpose of the little stacks of metal and resin. And how many mysteries are still awaiting their explanation. To this day men argue heatedly about the mammoth stone spheres scattered over a large area of Central America which present a chart of the constellations as they once were, the column of pure iron in India and the ancient Indian monuments which are alleged to contain information about the diameter of hydrogen atom.<sup>10</sup>

### *Miracle Men*

It is a fact that countries with ancient and continuing civilizations like India and China have a complex of ancient scientific knowledge which is yet to be properly understood. This is the main reason why mystics, yogis and miracle men continue to have a field day in India. These so-called miracle men do achieve certain physical and mental powers through the practice of yoga, mental discipline etc. and fail to understand the nature of the powers they achieve. They develop potentialities that are natural and are within every individual but mistake them for supernatural powers. The tendency among some materialists to dismiss the reality of these human powers springs from an unscientific attitude. Both the dogmatic materialist and the credulous spiritualist are committing errors.

It cannot be denied that ancient Sanskrit works contain a good deal of knowledge. In fields like astronomy and medicine many things were known by the ancients. Because of the influence of idealistic metaphysics and the excessive use of linguistic symbolism it is difficult to decipher this ancient wisdom. There appears to be some substance in what E J Parnov says:

In ancient monuments it is often hard to distinguish scientific notions from black magic, philosophy from poetry, cosmology from mythology. The ancient Babylonian epics, the ancient Hebrew book of Zohar, the Indian Ramayana and Mahabharata did not merely present a garbled and obscure reflection of the world: they reflected it syncretistically, they present us with a methodology of knowledge in which the scientific is inseparable from the artistic...It would be wrong to directly identify mythology with philosophy, but nor can one completely separate mythology from man's first native notions of surrounding reality. There can be no doubt that the lives of Rama and Krishna, Mādrak and Oziris, Saturn and Chronosus contain symbolic interpretations of space, time and the basic elements thought to constitute the essence of all real things. The ancients did not know the physics in our sense of the word, but they created the embryo of a descriptive science, which one could call 'fantastic physics.'<sup>11</sup>

Because of this mixture of fact and fiction much of what had been achieved in the old days has yet to be properly assessed. There are the credulous and chauvinistic who want to claim that nothing has been left unsaid by the ancient seers. This is a particularly common attitude in India. Mention any modern device or discovery and these people will immediately bring out some 'evidence' from Mahabharata or Ramayana to 'prove' that these things were already discovered by our forefathers. Aeroplanes were used by Rama to fly back to Ayodhya from Lanka, and in the war between Rama and Ravana all sorts of nuclear missiles were used! Even laser beams were used to destroy the enemy!

There are some vedic scholars who maintain that every word in the vedas has a hidden symbolic meaning apart from what is commonly understood of them. P D Raval of Morvi (Saurashtra) in his book *Atomic Theory in the Vedas* tries to argue that the Vedic Rishis knew about the nuclear theory. All these might appear fantastic to the modern student. One major defect in these assumptions is that they ignore sociology. Highly developed technology could not have arisen in a pre-industrial society merely by the will of some 'learned men.' This is not to deny that the ancients had achieved a good deal of insight into several physical phenomena.

For instance, the ancient medical systems of India and China have several practices which are capable of showing good results even today. Ancient Chinese physicians used to practise what is called acupuncture and today it is extensively practised in China with good results. Chinese doctors are not able to explain why this puncturing of the body with

needles works. But they have an open mind and are probing the mystery. This shows that any object including the human body can be studied from many angles and a given approach does not exhaust all possibilities. For instance, a modern physiologist may ignore the extremely subtle and inter-dependent character of the nervous system. The ancient physicians had the chance to observe these facts and through the process of trial and error they must have succeeded in laying down the practice of acupuncture. Moreover, when one is confronted with results or effects there can be no denying of the causes. But the causes may be yet unrevealed to us and we have to patiently probe them. The same holds good for much of the yogic practices too.

### *Yoga Under Scrutiny*

No one can deny that yoga has some para-normal potentialities and, therefore, it should have its basis in the physiology of man. By physiology we also mean the activities and potentialities of the higher nervous system of man. Work done by B K Anand of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi (in collaboration with Wenger of the University of California and Bagchi of the University of Michigan) on the performance of yogis had brought out some interesting results. Anand had found that some yogis could perform three feats. They could (1) exercise a measure of voluntary control on their autonomic nervous system, which they showed by conscious production of sweat on a specific area on the forehead; (2) they could cause conscious change of metabolism even to the level of 50 per cent below the normal rate; and (3) show evidence of brain activity when there were no sensory affronts to cause excitation in the brain. The EEG graphs showed that during meditation the yogis were mentally active though they were not aware of anything happening outside. These results, according to K Ramakrishna Rao, Head of the Department of Psychology and Parapsychology, Andhra University and President of the Parapsychological Society of India, suggest that "the brain can function without any stimuli, and if this is so it would give a basis for the fact that people can have knowledge of things without sensory participation." However Rao immediately adds: "This of course is still an idea which remains to be experimentally studied."<sup>12</sup> It would be wrong to say that knowledge about external objects can arise unless the brain has some ways to perceive it. The problem therefore is to probe how in para-normal conditions the brain does this.

The Soviet psychologists have advanced the hypothesis of 'bioplasma', which is described as a kind of 'fourth state of matter.' This is other than liquid, solid, and gaseous and considered by Russian parapsychologists to be constantly in interaction with other non-living states. Bioplasma, it is reported, can be photographed by a device invented by Semyon and Valentina Kirlian.<sup>13</sup> This device can convert the non-electrical effect of bioplasma into an electrical one and photograph it. It appears

as a glow around living objects. All human beings, animals and plants give off bioplasma. It is believed that psychokinetic phenomenon—moving small objects with 'psychic power'—derives from this bioplasmic effect. Nina Kulagina, who can perform psychokinetic phenomenon, when photographed with help of the Kirlian device, shows flare patterns around her eyes, head, hands and all her body, it is reported.

Certain Soviet doctors consider that there is a link between the concept of bioplasma and the Chinese technique of acupuncture. It is reported that Viktor Adamenko along with some others invented a device called tobioscope (a flashlight-like device) that detects the location and condition of acupuncture points. According to Adamenko the tobioscope measures changes in the body's 'bioplasmic energy' indicating health or disease. Adamenko goes a step further and believes that in future the bioplasmic system will be recognized equally important as the lymphatic, nervous and circulatory systems. The 1970 edition of the *Soviet Encyclopaedia* defines parapsychology as "the area of psychical and bio-psychical research dealing with the informational and energetics possibilities of living organism. Parapsychology considers the newest forms of sensibility..."

While the Chinese scientists today are patiently probing the wisdom of their ancients consistent with the spirit of materialism, we do not have a correspondingly healthy attitude in this country. Most scientists here who are conditioned by tradition are falling into the trap of spiritualism in trying to explain yoga. And on the other side we have dogmatist materialists who dismiss yoga and other disciplines as false.

Discussing Kūṇḍalinī Shakti, a basic concept in Patanjali's yoga, H T Munshi shows that yogic powers are scientifically explainable. Munshi says, "Yogic text-books preach that there are 72,000 *nāḍīs* in a human body. This figure is merely symbolic. The nervous system, with its innumerable branches, sub-branches, twigs, ganglia, plexuses and subsidiary plexuses is the most complex that nature could create in millions of years of leisurely evolutionary processes."<sup>14</sup>

Munshi says that though histologically every tissue of the body has been studied under the microscope and anatomy has progressed a great deal, our knowledge of the functional significance of the autonomic system is very incomplete. The power of Kūṇḍalinī in yoga system is supposed to rise through the spinal cord.

The activity of the spinal cord is judged only by its anatomical connections, by consequences of its removal and the study of reflexes but, strictly speaking, very little is known about the normal activity of the spinal cord. To some physiologists it seems obvious that the spinal cord functions not as a conductor of impulses *only*. Regarding higher cortical centres, different and diverse ways of behaviour, ideas and ideals in the course of individual development, cannot be explained easily.

According to Munshi it is difficult to judge from available Sanskrit

literature the exact location of Kundalini which is also known by the name Ishwari, Bhujangi, Shakti and so on. Could it be *filum terminale* (a thick filament which stretches from the terminal end of the spinal cord and ends near the coccyx)? Is it the *ganglion impar* which is formed by the fusion of *Ida* and *Pingala* at their lower end? Munshi considers both these improbable, as the *filum terminale* is a sheath entirely devoid of nerve tissue while *ganglion impar* gives off no branches and has no direct connections with great abdominal plexuses. "It seems, solar plexus with its ten secondary plexuses and ramifications in all directions is the answer."<sup>15</sup>

Through rigid discipline and asceticism the yogi subjugates these plexuses and nerve centres. Through the technique of pranayama it is possible to control respiratory functions. Munshi says:

The respiratory centre is situated in medulla, from which vegi nerves also originate. Particularly, the vagus nerve is more important as it applies autonomic fibres to the heart, lungs, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, proximal part of colon, gall bladder, liver, pancreas and also to solar plexus. Thus, controlling impulses to solar plexus by pranayama is possible. In order to achieve it, various rhythms of breathing, yogic exercises and postures are necessary.

Trying to control the autonomous systems can be dangerous. Munshi quotes a well-known incident: Kashinath Upasani (Upasani Maharaj of Sakori) concentrated on cardiac plexus which unsettled his respiratory centre through the vagus nerve and the involuntary respiratory function was badly damaged. He could only breathe consciously. As soon as he diverted his attention from breathing or fell asleep, breathing would stop. He had to be guided by Sai Baba of Shiridi to get rid of this trouble. It is not surprising that a yogi who has developed control over his nervous system can perform some 'miracles.' But they are really not 'miracles.' What really happens is that some of the yogis indulge in sleight of hand and magical feats to impress upon the credulous that they are miracle men who can produce wristwatches and other things from the void. Magic is magic; mental and physical powers attained through appropriate exercises are real. Moreover, one need not be a yogi in order to be a magician. P C Sorcar was a great magician, but he never claimed to have any 'supernatural' powers.

### *Extra Sensory Perception*

While the physiological powers achieved through appropriate exercises should not mystify us and it should also be possible to explain such phenomena by probing the psychosomatic functions, there are borderline problems in psychology that are still to be probed and are in fact being probed by scientists all over the world. It is in this area that 'spiritualist' superstitions have a field day. What I mean is the so-called ESP (extra sensory perception) phenomena. Some of the ESP enthusiasts would claim that there are brain waves and certain minds can communicate with each other through these waves thousands of miles away. Possibly

there are brain waves, but the trouble with our metaphysicians is that they are ever ready to go beyond what is doubted and take an inductive jump in accordance with their metaphysical notions. They even use complicated mathematics in this dubious theorizing.

G T K Chari, Chairman of the Department of Philosophy and Psychology, Madras Christian College, takes a lot of analytical pain to prove the soul which is not subject to time and space. Chari observes:

In Vedantic mysticism, as I prefer to construe it, consciousness is not ascribed to the self; the self is rather ascribed to consciousness. Consciousness has its personal, interpersonal and transpersonal ranges. The transpersonal in mystical experience discloses itself to a unique person who is ever transcending himself and ever finding himself in a network of interpersonal relationships.<sup>16</sup>

According to Chari, 'spontaneous telepathic percipience' is possible. If we start with truncated selves in space and time and introduce ESP in an ad hoc fashion, the difficulty seems formidable. But surely the whole question is about the metaphysical status of selves. I suggest that we are facing a situation in which spatio-temporal linkages have to be embedded in a non-metrisable world of selves with interpersonal exchanges determining the behaviour of the metrical manifolds.<sup>17</sup>

However, in these cases the 'will to believe' by the person concerned might play a role as stressed by D D Kosambi. According to Kosambi what usually happens in parapsychological research is that "the experimenter's will to believe is stronger than his commonsense." Kosambi adds:

Parapsychologists test ESP, "extra-sensory perception" (such as telepathy) by having two people match cards at a distance. The effect is so faint and irregular as to call for delicate statistical tests, which show that the chances are very small, for random matching, wherefore the parapsychologists claim victory. Unfortunately my own experiments showed that the kind of shuffling practised for ESP is inefficient when judged by the same kind of statistics that is applied for card matching. Cards originally next to each other tend too often to stay together. Claims of ESP would be more convincing if one produced supplementary evidence (say matching encephalograms for sender and receiver) for a physical mechanism of transmission. Some regard the effect as beyond normal sensation, transcendental, not accessible to material analysis. In that case, laboratory tests and the statistical 'proof' become mere ritual.<sup>18</sup>

One must make a distinction between serious-minded researchers, who with an open mind want to probe what are called parapsychological phenomena (because there are certain mental activities which need adequate explanation), and the blind believers in spiritualist miracles. For example, K Ramakrishna Rao wanted to test the claims of materialization of objects. Rao reports: "We collected information concerning several

dozens of such men and were able to work with a few. Our experience has been quite frustrating and disappointing. We found some actually cheated, some tricked through sleight of hand and none demonstrated to our satisfaction anything that we could consider parapsychological.”<sup>20</sup>

However, a blind believer like S K Ghaswala, who is a highly qualified engineer and reviewer of science books, counters Rao:

It appears that Professor K R Rao has mixed up the two distant concepts of ESP on the one hand, divinity, spiritualism and reincarnation on the other. Obviously materialization is not a phenomenon that can be practised by all and sundry and be capable of being trusted by ordinary mortals like us. One has to attain a very high degree and level of purity of body and mind to reach a stage for performing these so-called miracles. It has been proved in the case of saints and savants like Christ, Krishna, Zoroaster, Sai Baba of Shirdi and now the living Sathya Sai Baba of Puttaparti, that the human form (in which they appear) is capable of performing these miracles which just cannot be analysed by any known means but have to be accepted faithfully.<sup>21</sup>

This is the language of a blind believer.

### *War on Irrationality*

No serious scientist can admit the duality of matter and spirit. There can be no parallel set of laws, one for the material realm and another for the so-called spiritual realm, contradicting each other. This is asserted by scientist-philosophers like Michael Polanyi who argues that the activity of the whole mind cannot be understood in terms of an understanding of the laws that govern the functioning of its parts. After analysing the structure of consciousness Polanyi comes to the conclusion, “While no observations of physiology can make us apprehend the operations of the mind, the operations of the mind will never be found to interfere with the principles of physiology, nor with the even lower principles of physics and chemistry on which they rely”.<sup>22</sup>

While it is necessary to oppose credulity and the ‘will to believe’ in respect of what are called parapsychological phenomena, it is equally necessary to maintain an open mind for mind has its peculiar ways and there are occasionally individuals who have some abnormal powers. There are for instance people who can do calculations as fast as a computer, though their other faculties may be even less developed as compared to normal human beings. It may be possible that certain brain cells may get spontaneously activated resulting in unusual memories (of past generations?), which are usually interpreted as memories of past birth. That memory is nothing but a material phenomenon, say, a certain ordering of chemical properties in the neurons, is now proved by researchers. In fact memory has been even transferred from one animal to another. Learning modifies the brain. If the modified matter as a result of learning in one mouse is transferred to another mouse which is ignorant of what the first mouse has learned, it is found that the mouse which gets the brain stuff

(say, RNA molecules) also gets the new knowledge. This experiment had been done in flat worms also.

*Science Reporter* (published by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, New Delhi) in its 1970 April (No. 4) issue carried an article on memory by A K Sen and B K Goel showing that research since 1950 has been converging to the idea that memory is not only a biochemical process but that it is even transferable. After narrating the various experiments the two scientists say:

The above experiments clearly establish that some biochemical changes do occur on the stimulation of brain cells and storage of information. These biochemical changes include alteration in the rate of synthesis of macromolecules like protein and RNA. But whether these changes are confined to RNA and protein alone is not clearly known, for no one has put in any effort to show similar changes in, say, the lipids of the brain.<sup>23</sup>

All the evidence from research shows that there is nothing immaterial about memory or other brain functions. Only that the molecular process is very complex and many things are yet to be known.

If psychological dispositions are thus physiological in the higher sense it is not surprising that some of these can be transferred to the progeny by the parent. Moreover, it is now known to scientists how the DNA molecule contains in its information-coded structure the basis for such a transfer. There is nothing immaterial about this because information or knowledge is nothing but a certain ordering of matter, ultimately. It is a chemical phenomenon and is hence extremely complex and dynamic in living systems, while it is just mechanical in a man-made computer. It has been the extremely successful self-regulative and replicating function of the living matter that led people to believe that there was a ghost in the machine. The living cell is an information-packed unit and each cell is capable of growing into an exact replica of the parent.

While no human child can become really human unless it is brought into human society, no animal can be humanized with all the educational techniques of man. The neurological basis for learning is inherited. And this is shared by one individual with the rest. The built-in tendency in human beings to rationalize must be considered an evolutionary inheritance which is continuously being enhanced and enriched. This has been recognized by Lenin: "Concepts and deductions of mathematics are convincing and incontestable because of the fact that the logical process as well as the primary concepts of mathematics have been developed on the basis of thousands of years of practice and have extended to the consciousness of man".<sup>24</sup> Discussing the nature of mathematics in the light of dialectical materialism, B P Adhikari (Indian Statistical Institute) observes that one of the advanced problems to be solved is the "manner in which the experience of thousands of years of collective practice gets 'extended' to man's consciousness and, more important still, how this is transmitted from one generation to another..." Some idealist psychologists like

C G Jung had advanced the theory of 'collective unconscious'. Adhikari says that Engels had used the term 'accumulated inheritance' and quotes him as having said, "If among us the mathematical axioms seem self-evident to every eight-year-old child, and in no need of proof from experience, this is solely the result of accumulated inheritance". We may as well use the Pavlovian term 'conditioned reflex'. This common inheritance consists of the conditioned reflexes of the collective. What is not to be forgotten is that even the irrational fears and superstitions are carried down from generation to generation and this is the psychological basis of the survival of superstitions. The acquirement of scientific knowledge does not automatically lead to a deconditioning of old superstitious reflexes. Assimilation is a long drawn out process. It is also significant that Jung sought to explain religion in terms of his theory of collective unconscious. In a country like India with deep-rooted traditions of mysticism one can imagine how powerful the pulls of this 'collective unconscious' or 'common inheritance' can be.

Though human knowledge of the external world has progressed considerably, the various subtle influences the natural forces exert on living organisms are yet to be probed. Take for instance our knowledge about the moon. The moon is now within the reach of man but how subtly the phases of the moon influence the bio-chemical processes in human beings is yet not fully known. It has been found by Moscow scientists that solar flares affected human moods, and more road accidents were observed whenever there was intense solar activity. This shows that while some bigger mysteries are being solved, smaller mysteries remain. This problem can be tackled only by expanding research in all directions. This disparity in research is unavoidable today because of various social and economic compulsions. It should not be forgotten that planetary probes have developed as a spin-off from missile research for military application. But in a communist society when, (as Marx had envisaged), the tyranny of things will be overcome and the true realm of freedom will dawn, it should be possible for man to diversify research in all directions.

Today in every country occult beliefs thrive with the blessings of the bourgeoisie which finds in them an effective ideological weapon to perpetuate the mental slavery of the masses. Irrationality is an aid to exploitation. These beliefs are the opium of the masses. And the capitalist and feudal ruling classes want to provide this opium in abundance all over the world.

In India many miracle men pose as faith healers. In the context of the country's massive health problem this bait to attract the sick and the suffering is proving to be a highly successful one. Medicine is being developed by the ruling classes as a profit-making enterprise. The stranglehold of foreign drug industry, the high cost of medicines, lack of any indigenous constructive research to find cheaper remedies, all these combine to serve the vested interests.

It is futile to hope that the war on irrationality can be waged; as the so-called rationalists think, in isolation from the basic class struggle of the oppressed masses. In the ultimate analysis, the battle against superstitions can be successfully carried out only after the class battle is won. Meanwhile a militant cultural offensive can and should be initiated by the progressive forces to educate the masses in materialistic thinking.

- <sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of Philosophy*, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1967, p 281.
- <sup>2</sup> Quoted by Lenin in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, Moscow 1967, p 241.
- <sup>3</sup> ST Melyukhin, "On a Philosophical Evaluation of Modern Conceptions Concerning the Properties of Space and Time in the Microworld", *Philosophical Problems of Elementary-Particle Physics*, Moscow 1968, p 172.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p 172.
- <sup>5</sup> YP Terletsky, "On the Problem of the Spatial Structure of Elementary Particles" *Philosophical Problems of Elementary-Particle Physics*, Moscow 1968, p 145.
- <sup>6</sup> ST Melyukhin, *op. cit.*, p 177.
- <sup>7</sup> E J Parnov, *At the Crossroads of Infinities*, Mir Publishers, Moscow 1971, p 170.
- <sup>8</sup> VI Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, Moscow 1967, p 315.
- <sup>9</sup> VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 38 p 462.
- <sup>10</sup> E J Parnov, *op. cit.*, p 315.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p 12.
- <sup>12</sup> *Science Today*, June 1973.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*,
- <sup>14</sup> HT Munshi, "Kundalini Shakti", *Bhavan's Journal*, Annual Number 1971, p 305.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p 309.
- <sup>16</sup> CTK Chari, "From Structuralism to Mystical Personalism", *Current Trends in Indian Philosophy*, K Satchidananda Murty and K Ramakrishna Rao (Eds.), Andhra University Press-Asia Publishing House, p 81.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p 87.
- <sup>18</sup> D D Kosambi, "Adventure into the Unknown", *Current Trends in Indian Philosophy*, Asia Publishing House, p 157.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p 157.
- <sup>20</sup> *Science Today*, June 1973.
- <sup>21</sup> *Science Today*, August 1973.
- <sup>22</sup> *Knowing and Being*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, p 221.
- <sup>23</sup> *Science Reporter* (CSIR Publication) April 1970 (No. 4) p 232.
- <sup>24</sup> Quoted by B P Adhikari, "Comments on Mathematical Objects and Theory", *Marxist Miscellany*, No. 3, People's Publishing House, New Delhi 1973.

## COMMUNICATION

### *Development of Capitalism in Agriculture*

UTSA Patnaik (*Social Scientist*, Number 13, August 1973) has not refuted, from a Marxist-Leninist position, any of the points communicated (*Social Scientist*, Number 5, December 1972) as part of my criticism of her original study. Rather than trading 'direct' empirical data with the author I shall merely express my opinion on her basic deviations from the stand, viewpoint and method of Marxism-Leninism. Since our points are by no means original, and are entirely borrowed from social scientists more eminent than either of us, one must face the charge of being *textual* and quote extensively once again. After all, even Utsa Patnaik will admit that Marx and Lenin say it much better than we can and that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with quotations so long as they are not used formally or decoratively, or in order to rob Marxism-Leninism of its living essence while appearing to stand by its letter.

Utsa Patnaik's main charge is that her 'total thesis' has not been understood. One can only try to *indicate* an opinion, given the limitations of space. Her 'total thesis' is strongly influenced by an *academic trend*<sup>1</sup> that finds the Marxist-Leninist stand and viewpoint inadequate for a study of the concrete conditions of 'underdevelopment', and claims to develop the 'method' of Marx in order to make it suitable for studying the 'unique' conditions of countries such as India. The basic ideas of this trend shared, to some degree, by Utsa Patnaik can be expressed as follows:—

(a) There can be no general conception or definition of capitalism equally relevant to the conditions of 'development' and 'underdevelopment.' There are no *essential features* that can be said to characterize a socio-economic formation called capitalism. Capitalism in the advanced capitalist countries was different in all its essential features from the mode of production in the 'underdeveloped' countries.

(b) While capitalism in Europe's historical experience was an 'integrated, total' process which functioned on its own steam, in colonies

such as India, it did not go through this 'integrated, total' process. In fact, generalized commodity production was imposed on India from outside by imperialism, and did not develop into a genuine or full-fledged capitalism. While Lenin's definition of capitalism was "perfectly adequate" for Europe "in the context of an integrated process of capitalist development," a new definition of capitalism, derived from Marx's 'method,' is needed for India which "never saw an integrated development of capitalist production relations and generalized commodity production, out of the internal contradictions of its precapitalist mode."<sup>2</sup> What is required is a theory of the 'colonial modes of production.' To study the unique and singular features of the colonial mode of production in India, one must go back to the 'method' of Marx (as opposed to the 'model') as Lenin, not to speak of Stalin, failed to do.

(c) Advanced capitalist development and the colonial and dependent world of 'underdevelopment' are two repellent poles, two different animals, metropolis and satellite, opposite sides of the same coin. They are in a contrary and exact inverse relationship with each other and constitute a 'zero-sum' game. Imperialism might have industrialized Russia and the white colonies such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada, but it merely generated 'underdevelopment' in the non-white colonies and dependent countries. Its historical role, which Lenin could not really grasp, was only to *retard* the development of capitalism in the 'underdeveloped' world.

Utsa Patnaik understands the impact of British colonialism, both in the pre-imperialist and imperialist phases, as the *negation of capitalism in India*. Setting up her own definition of capitalism, she seeks and fails to find evidence of dynamic, independent ('integrated, total') development. She particularly fails to discover the 'logic of unfettered accumulation' <sup>3</sup> in India. From this, as Pares Chatteropadhyay points out, <sup>4</sup> Utsa Patnaik derives the conclusion that *colonialism did not allow the development of capitalism in India*. Utsa Patnaik's statements<sup>5</sup> make clear this conclusion beyond any possible doubt.

Utsa Patnaik is entitled to her 'creative Marxism', but where this stands in relation to the Marxist-Leninist stand, viewpoint and method must be noted. To start with, her thesis challenges the correctness and profound meaning of the Leninist thesis that imperialism, which is parasitical or moribund capitalism, *accelerates* as well as *retards* the development of capitalism in backward countries. It must be noted that Utsa Patnaik's thesis also repudiates the Leninist understanding of the historic significance of the era of imperialism to the colonies:

There was formerly an economic difference between the colonies and the European peoples, at least for the majority of the latter, the colonies having been drawn into *commodity* exchange and not into capitalist *production*. Imperialism changed this. Imperialism is, among other things, the export of *capital*. Capitalist production is being transplanted to the colonies at an ever-increasing rate.<sup>6</sup>

Lenin's statement applies particularly to India, where, as Stalin saw even in 1925,<sup>7</sup> the irreversible trend of the development of capitalism had profound economic and political consequences.

It can easily be seen how Utsa Patnaik's thesis on the mode of production in colonial India leads logically to the thesis of the 'colonial mode of production', although Utsa Patnaik would not accept, and would probably disown, such a label. It is no accident that a Trotskyite like Jairus Banaji, in an article, "Theory of Colonial Modes of Production,"<sup>8</sup> praises Utsa Patnaik's studies in the development of capitalism in Indian agriculture as a contribution — in a theoretically immature form — to a theory of 'colonial modes of production' as specific entities with their own coherence and laws of development. What distinguishes historical viewpoints such as Utsa Patnaik's, in the opinion of Jairus Banaji, is that they "reject both the feudal and capitalist characterization and argue that colonialism must be understood in terms of a specific mode of production, neither feudal nor capitalist though 'resembling' both at different levels."<sup>9</sup> While Jairus Banaji's chastening praise clearly points to the wrong tendency at work in Utsa Patnaik's academic studies and should make her look at these studies with deep suspicion, Banaji's dissatisfaction with her for not fully breaking away from 'traditional' Marxism is all in her favour and points to the possibility of reestablishing contact with the Marxist-Leninist stand, viewpoint and method.

Utsa Patnaik's redefinition of capitalism, relevant to the conditions of backwardness and to the 'unique' conditions of India, is not acceptable in the light of the 'traditional' definition by Marx and Lenin, accepted by working-class parties all over the world. While it is clear that the conditions of the development of capitalism in a remarkable variety of historical conditions must be concretely studied, there is no situation so 'unique' as to require a dilution or revision of the Marxist-Leninist theoretical understanding of capitalism. The essential theoretical analysis of capitalism applies to advanced as well as to colonial conditions.

The impact of colonialism on the socio-economic formation in India must be concretely studied, but it must be studied on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and not along the 'unique' path that Utsa Patnaik's empiricism opens up. Marxist-Leninist theory has produced the only scientific analysis of colonialism in its pre-imperialist and imperialist phases and the only scientific stand, viewpoint and method which can be applied to theoretical-conceptual work on the subject, to a concrete study of given colonial situations and to the solution of problems of specific colonial and dependent countries.

The contradictory movement of acceleration and retardation must be the starting point for any scientific study of the development of capitalism in India in the era of imperialism. This contradictory movement is, of course, characterized by *parasitism* which is inseparable from imperialism. To stress only the trend of *acceleration* is to fall into the trap set by

cynical and overt imperialists and by apologists of imperialism. To stress only the trend of *retardation* amounts to losing sight of real economic relations and to losing one's way in the swamp of economic romanticism, although of the 'left' variety.

## II

The next point relates to Utsa Patnaik's broad-minded liberalism which accepts as Marxists "Marxist scholars today, whether of the Maoist (Bettelheim, Althusser) or Trotskyist (Mandel) persuasions."<sup>10</sup> I am not sure if 'Maoist persuasion' implies a stand, viewpoint and method apart from, and transcending, Marxism-Leninism but it is perfectly clear, although it is not so to Paresh Chattopadhyay,<sup>11</sup> that Bettelheim's or Althusser's stand, viewpoint and method is *not* that of Marxism-Leninism which has been applied, with historic revolutionary results, to the concrete conditions of China by the Communist Party of China under the leadership of Chairman Mao Tse-tung. The specific deviation of Bettelheim or Althusser must be examined in greater detail before one can characterize it. As for the 'Trotskyist persuasion', it is utterly antagonistic to the theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism and to the working class movement and is recognized as a counter-revolutionary doctrine and trend by working-class parties all over the world.

## III

I disagree emphatically with Utsa Patnaik's 'creative' understanding of *class* and *production relation* as a mere 'conceptual-theoretical tool', an 'analytical category' which might or might not—especially in dealing with a 'specific empirical' situation—be 'imported' into a discussion. Marxism-Leninism differs from opportunist deviations primarily by its *class* outlook. It does not have to 'deliberately exclude' class relations from its observations *under any circumstances*, empirical or otherwise. From the standpoint of Marxism-Leninism, class and production relations are 'analytical categories' or 'conceptual-theoretical tools' (if you wish) *inseparable from* the reality of a socio-economic formation. Utsa Patnaik's eclecticism on the other hand, tries to reconcile a key aspect of the Marxist-Leninist standpoint and method with a metaphysical theoretical-conceptual position borrowed from the French philosopher, Louis Althusser. She tries to reconcile the Marxist theoretical concepts, class and production relations, with Althusser's fundamental distortion of the relation between these concepts and life.<sup>12</sup>

The Marxist attitude to the relation between theoretical and analytical concepts *and* life is expressed sharply by Marx as follows:

Another argument is that the different factors are not considered as a single whole; as though this separation had forced its way from textbooks into real life and not, on the contrary, from real life into the textbooks, and as though it were a question of the dialectical reconciliation of concepts and not of the resolution of actually existing conditions.<sup>13</sup>

Apply this standpoint to Utsa Patnaik's theoretical exertions which purport to study class and production relations as analytical categories and concepts which might (or might not) be 'imported' into a discussion of an empirically given situation, and you have an insight into how the stand, viewpoint and method of Marx and Lenin is opposed to those of 'creative Marxists' such as Utsa Patnaik.

Utsa Patnaik has entirely misunderstood the criticism of her confusion between the Marxist-Leninist *theoretical principles* and the concrete study of a *given historical situation* and has, on the basis of misunderstanding, constructed a theory on the relationship between *analytical* (theoretical-conceptual) and *descriptive* categories.

It was pointed out in my criticism that: (a) Utsa Patnaik's distinction between Marx's *method* and *model* is unsound, especially because she considers the method rather than the model applicable to India. She mistakes the *theoretical abstraction* provided by Marx and Lenin for some 'model', which she considers applicable to Europe and inapplicable to the 'unique' conditions of India and expresses her preference for the 'method'. (b) In defining and developing the 'method', she fails to select the most important and essential, and becomes submerged in details of secondary importance. She confuses technique with economics, the existence of capitalism in agriculture with its higher organizational basis, its higher level of investment and with the 'animal spirits' of the entrepreneurs. Thus, she too hastily raises "certain facts in agronomics, without examining their significance, to the level of general economic laws."<sup>14</sup> (c) The failure to select the most important and essential, and submergence in details of secondary importance leads Utsa Patnaik to the conclusion that the Indian experience is *unique*, needing a modification or revision of the theoretical stand and viewpoint of Marx and Lenin on capitalism in agriculture. Her *descriptive* study of the specificity of the backward Indian experience—not without interest to Marxist-Leninist analysis—leads, therefore, to questioning, even challenging, the foundations of Marxist-Leninist theory.

Utsa Patnaik defends her use of descriptive and unscientific categories such as 'dominant landholders' and 'urban entrants' staunchly: first, by citing Marx's reference to "urban and other moneyed people";<sup>15</sup> secondly, by advancing her own theory on the relation between analytical and descriptive categories; and thirdly, by declaring that when the Communist Party of India (Marxist) refers to *capitalist landlords*, it refers ("quite correctly") to a *descriptive category* and not to a *class*.

In the first place, it must be noted that Marx does not use descriptive categories such as "urban and other moneyed people" *in lieu of* class analysis. In the stand, viewpoint and method of Marx, there is no question of 'importing' or 'excluding' class in a discussion of a specific empirical situation, because there is no Marxism without its *class analysis and outlook*. Secondly, Utsa Patnaik uses descriptive categories such as 'dominant landholders' and 'urban entrants' with the specific purpose of deny-

ing the validity of a Marxist-Leninist class analysis. Thirdly, the term *capitalist landlords* used by the CPI(M), is not a descriptive category advanced in lieu of a class analysis; but refers to a section of the landlord class which has adopted, in differing degrees, the capitalist mode of production and exploitation: in other words, a new-type landlordism which combines in itself the features of capitalism as well as of feudalism.<sup>16</sup> These capitalist landlords are as much a *class* as, say, the bourgeoisie. But they are a modern class 'with a pigtail', appropriate to a complex historical situation where the capitalist mode of production develops in a vast swamp of feudal and semi-feudal relations—a swamp which can be cleared not by the bourgeoisie and its agrarian policy, but only by the revolutionary initiative and action of millions of toilers under the leadership of the working class and its party.

Utsa Patnaik purports to deal with a specific empirical observation and with descriptive categories. She accuses me of 'importing' an analytical category, *class* into the discussion, whereas she has "deliberately avoided it."<sup>17</sup> On the strength of this, she poses a question which, she imagines, is unanswerable in the velocity and profundity of its empiricism: to which single class or distinct production relation would we assign a poor peasant who gets half his income from cultivating rented land, and the other half from wage labour? We are not sure whether she expects us to come up with answers such as: Rs. 50/50 = tenant-labourer, or Rs. 51-49 = tenant, or Rs. 49-51 = labourer; or whether she intends this to serve the rhetorical purpose of denying the validity of the 'traditional' Marxist-Leninist agrarian class analysis<sup>18</sup> for the 'unique' conditions of India.

#### IV

It is true that in my reference to the Marxist-Leninist understanding of *production* relations and *property* relations, many things were taken for granted. For it was assumed this understanding would be so clear that even a 'creative Marxist' such as Utsa Patnaik could not dispute it. How can one take Utsa Patnaik's (much less Jairus Banaji's) word that the identification of production relations with property relations is "explicitly repudiated" by Marx in his "Marginal Notes on Wagner's *Lehrbuch der Politischen Oekonomie* (as yet not translated into English)"?<sup>19</sup> It is futile to participate in exercises which purport to determine whether the Marxist understanding expressed in *A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy* is the same as—or has a 'one-to-one correspondence' with—the understanding reflected in the above-mentioned marginal notes: or whether the Marxist understanding was correctly understood and articulated by Lenin. It is an insult to the path-finding scientific quality and revolutionary achievement of Marx and Engels, and to Lenin's momentous work in developing Marxism in the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution, to carry on these exercises.

A simple and by no means original point made in the earlier communication must be reiterated, a point made more ably and forcefully

by Paresh Chattopadhyay in his reply to Utsa Patnaik in the *Economic and Political Weekly*.<sup>20</sup> In this connection Utsa Patnaik, and all those who share her viewpoint on this question must read not merely the *Preface*, but the substantive discussion contained in the *Introduction*, rough notes found among Marx's papers after his death and included as an appendix to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* by later publishers.<sup>21</sup>

Utsa Patnaik is plainly confused over the question of relations of production and property relations. She continues to stand by this confusion, which gives rise to the formulation that the concrete conditions of the land settlements made by the British in India and the legal system introduced by them ensured a *divergence between relations of production and property relations*. Behind this argument and behind this attempt to apply 'Marxism' creatively to the 'direct data' lies a simple theoretical misunderstanding which can be easily resolved. Utsa Patnaik evidently considers property relations as part of the superstructure, to be put along with the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophical and ideological forms. However, as Marx saw it, relations of production are simply known in non-scientific or legal terminology, or in popular usage, as property relations—"which expresses the same thing in legal terms."<sup>22</sup>

In the earlier communication, I expressed the opinion that Utsa Patnaik, reinforcing herself with a vulgarism by Ernest Mandel, constructs a false theory elaborating the 'unique' conditions of backward India which involve property relations different from its relations of production. I am thankful to Paresh Chattopadhyay for clarifying this point beyond all possible dispute in his reply to Utsa Patnaik in the *Economic and Political Weekly*. As he points out, the term 'property relations', a legal expression, has a *primary* meaning and a *secondary* meaning. In the primary sense (with which alone we are concerned in our discussion), property relations refer to the real relations of appropriation arising out of the process of production.<sup>23</sup> In the secondary sense, which Utsa Patnaik appropriates for the purpose of advancing her superficial theory borrowed from Mandel, property relations may be identified with strictly legal relations, signifying property rights through legally conferred titles.

We are concerned with property relations as *real relations of appropriation* and not at all with the formal or legal point of view and status: hence, "property relations is but a different (that is, legal) name for 'production relations'."<sup>24</sup> Utsa Patnaik's understanding of the whole question goes against the Marxist essence of the matter, as against its letter.

No attempt will be made here at any 'analysis' of the impact of the *ryotwari* system on juridical relations and on the precapitalist production relations in Madras agriculture.<sup>25</sup> First of all, I have not studied that question deeply or done any specialized work on it. Secondly, any such detailed analysis is unnecessary to the resolution of this dispute: for *what is at dispute* is not the 'direct data' but the essence of the Marxist-Leninist theoretical position on production relations and property relations. If

Utsa Patnaik finds herself unable to accept this but depends, instead, on vulgarisms patented by Mandel and subscribed to by Bettelheim and Althusser, there can perhaps be scope for argument with all of them on the basis of superficial academic scholarship. *There can be no scope for argument with any of them on the basis of Marxism-Leninism.*

In an attempt to defend her 'whole thesis', Utsa Patnaik has tied herself into several knots, which only make one realize how far her 'creative Marxist' method is from the Marxist-Leninist essence of the matter. Countering the criticism, made also by Paresh Chattopadhyay, that her basic theoretical mistake is the *failure to see capital as a relation*, Utsa Patnaik protests that she is "well aware that capital is a social relation involving the bourgeoisie which possesses the means of production on the one hand, and the proletariat which it employs on wages for profit, on the other."<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, she persists in answering in the negative the question: can the *particular* social relations between landowners and agricultural wage labourers which developed in colonial India be identified as capitalist relations of production?

What is the method of Utsa Patnaik's answer to this question?

(a) She makes a triumphant reference to capital in the sphere of *circulation*, to trader's, usurer's, and 'land-purchasing' capital, to make the perfectly correct point that these antediluvian forms of capital inhibit the penetration of capital in the sphere of agricultural production.

(b) She imports a component from her 'whole thesis': the peasantry was subjected to forms of exploitation typical of capital without a transition to *more productive* capitalist relations of production and cites once more Marx's views on the parasitical role of usurer's capital and the significance of merchant's capital.

(c) She drives home the argument by a discovery all her own: Landed property, rather than capitalist investment, formed, in this case, the basis for the appropriation of surplus labour by the 'dominant landholders', neither capitalist nor feudal; this surplus labour in its money form was not generally invested in agricultural production, but was more commonly employed—like the landlord's surpluses—for conspicuous consumption, moneylending, trade or land-purchasing, that is, *mainly in the sphere of circulation*.

(d) She reiterates the key point made in her article: the existence of *wage-labour*—free in the sense that it is not burdened by a precapitalist type of servile status, but unfree in the sense that it is destitute and 'tied to agriculture'—does not imply capitalist relations of production, except at the risk of very drastic oversimplification.<sup>9</sup>

The reply to this 'Marxism' is in fact quite simple:

(a) The role of the antediluvian forms of capital—the parasitical role of usurer's capital and the impact of the independent existence and development of merchant's capital on capitalist production in agriculture—is, of course, highly relevant to a study of agrarian relations and of capitalism in agriculture. There is abundant evidence on the role of these

forms of capital in India for the twentieth century and evidence which shows how landlordism, feudal and semi-feudal, practised usury. But the point is that the existence and development of these forms of capital do not *rule out or disprove* the existence and development of capital in the sphere of agricultural production *in an extremely distorted form*. Lenin made a detailed critique and refutation of this "Narodonik prejudice," which denies that the agrarian bourgeoisie is also a representative of merchant's and usurer's capital and that the threads both of merchant's capital (the loaning of money on the security of land, the buying-up of various products etc.) and of industrial capital (commercial agriculture with the aid of wage workers etc.) merge in the hands of the agrarian bourgeoisie.<sup>28</sup> The role of these antediluvian forms of capital in the different parts of colonial India must be studied and analysed concretely in the light of Marxist-Leninist theoretical principles and not along 'creative' lines indicated by Utsa Patnaik.

(b) Beyond comprehension is the point of Utsa Patnaik's contention that the peasantry (which must have been, after all, involved in production relations of some kind) was merely subject to forms of *exploitation* typical of capital without a transition to 'more productive' capitalist relations of production. If the peasantry was involved in neither feudal nor capitalist relations of production—but was subject merely to forms of 'exploitation'—what is the role of production in this 'unique' socio-economic formation? To recruit Marx's characterization of usurer's and trader's capital in the service of disproving the reality of production represents mechanical Marxism of a truly original and startling type.

(c) Utsa Patnaik's statement that landed property, rather than capitalist investment, formed the basis for the appropriation of 'surplus labour' by the 'dominant landholders' contains an important truth to which Lenin paid the closest attention in his studies of the development of capitalism in Russia and which is underlined by the C P I (M) with special reference to India: that is, the parasitical role of land monopoly which is a basic 'limit on capitalist agriculture.'<sup>29</sup> It must be noted, however, that she starts with a basic confusion over the Marxist-Leninist theoretical understanding of the relation between *production* and *circulation*.<sup>30</sup> When she applies this theoretical confusion to the specific conditions of agriculture in colonial India, one is entitled, from the standpoint of Marxism-Leninism, to raise a voice of protest, although one has not done any original research on the subject and is not in a position to trade 'direct data' with the author.

(d) What seems most unfortunate—in a theoretical as well as in a practical sense—is Utsa Patnaik's attempt to deny the *trend of proletarianization* among the peasant masses in colonial India. I have no disagreement with her point that more direct data is required on the exploitation of labour in colonial India.

I reiterate, however, my criticism of Utsa Patnaik on this point:

*Her understanding of the role and significance of wage labour is the best and most direct indicator of her failure to see capital as a relation of production.* As noted in my earlier communication, Lenin stressed that "in agriculture the process of development of capitalism is immeasurably more complex and assumes more diverse forms (than in industry)",<sup>81</sup> showed how the proletarianization of the peasantry may assume several forms which cannot be recognized by vulgar economy; and warned against "too stereotyped an understanding of the theoretical proposition that capitalism requires the free, landless workers."<sup>82</sup> It should also be noted that a characteristic which Utsa Patnaik has discovered in the 'unique' conditions of colonial India and which, in her scheme, invalidates the Leninist class analysis was underlined by Lenin as early as 1896: the standard of living of the one-horse and horseless peasants is *not higher than* that of farm labourers, and if anything approximates to the minimum standard of living of the latter.<sup>83</sup>

Theoretically, the problem continues to be very simple, for all the direct data which Utsa Patnaik has produced. The whole point is that whether it is an advanced capitalist or colonial situation one is dealing with, "the extent to which hired labour is used is certainly the best and most direct indicator of the development of capitalism.. Hired labour is the chief sign and indicator of capitalism in agriculture."<sup>84</sup>

Lenin took into detailed account the argument that, given the complexity of agrarian relations in a particular situation, hired labour is not necessarily an indicator of capitalism in agriculture. He repeatedly pointed out in his studies of the development of capitalism in agriculture as early as 1896 and in 1916, that the complexity of relations in agriculture does not obscure the *basic relation of capital*:

When the verbose economists and statisticians who express the most popular bourgeois views hold forth on the dissimilarity of conditions in agriculture and industry, the specific nature of the former, and so on and so forth, one is always tempted to say: 'Gentlemen! You yourselves are most to blame for maintaining and spreading oversimplified and crude notions of evolution in agriculture.' Remember Marx's *Capital*. In it you find references to the extreme variety of forms of land ownership, such as feudal, clan, communal (and primitive squatter), state etc., which capitalism encounters when it makes its appearance on the historical scene. Capital subordinates to itself all these varied forms of land ownership and remoulds them after its own fashion, and if one is to understand, evaluate and express this process in statistical terms, one must learn to modify the formulation of the question and the methods of investigation in accordance with the changing *form* of the process.<sup>85</sup>

According to Utsa Patnaik, the fact that the 'nominally free' wage workers (whose position must not be confused with precapitalist bondage or servitude) are exploited by "big landowners in their capacity as land-owners" does not imply a capitalist relation of production. We are

concerned *not* with nominal categories, but with real relations of production. Therefore, the question is whether these persons (entered as 'agricultural labourers' in the censuses) are really *free* wage workers, or *not entirely free*, or *unfree* labourers, tied by various precapitalist bonds and compulsions. In other words, to determine whether a section of the rural poor can be classified as the proletariat (which cannot exist without the formation of capital at the other pole) the question to consider is: *do they have to sell their labour power in order to live, and are they free to sell their labour power?*<sup>86</sup>

Marxist-Leninist analysis of the relation between capital and wage-labour must not be applied mechanically to the specific conditions of India, or any other country. The CPI (M) has applied the Marxist-Leninist analysis of this relation to the specific conditions of India, after a careful study of the essential features and significance of rural wage-labour:

The rural wage-labourers, who can be more correctly described as pauperised peasants, are neither really free wage-labourers *in the strict economic sense of the term*, nor is an overwhelming majority of them able to secure even subsistence wages for their work. Barring a few centres around cities and towns in certain areas where commercial crops are grown and intensive cultivation is prevalent, the wage that the average agricultural labourer is getting today has no relation whatsoever with the wages of the industrial working class in the country. It is the *ownership of land by a meagre 5 per cent of the households* over more than 37 per cent of the total cultivated area at one end, and a vast mass of peasantry—70 per cent of the agrarian population—with no land or tiny plots at the other, that enable the landlords to purchase rural labour at destitute wages, while providing them with an army of tenants-at-will, with no legal standing whatsoever. The Congress agrarian reforms had created and extended a new-type landlordism which *combines in itself both the features of capitalism as well as feudalism*: they created a 'tenant' who combines in himself the features of the serf and the wage-worker, and they created a rural wage-labourer, who, as a pauperized peasant forced by circumstances, is tied to the village and farming and has no other go except to accept any miserable wage-rate his rural employer is willing to pay. (Emphasis added)<sup>87</sup>

The resemblance between the CPI (M)'s analysis and Utsa Patnaik's analysis of the essential features and significance of wage-labour in India is entirely superficial. The CPI (M)'s analysis of the question, dealing with post-independent India consists in studying the theoretically essential question and the methods of investigation in accordance with the changing *forms* of the process. Utsa Patnaik's attempts to discover 'transitional' and 'intermediate' theoretical concepts for the purpose of identifying 'transitional' and 'intermediate' forms of 'employer-labourer' relation-

ships and her references to "this ill-defined twilight range...which emerged as a result of the imperialist impact" amount to repudiating the essence of the Marxist-Leninist analysis of real relations of production.

We must recognize and pay the closest attention to certain facts of agrarian life that *even today* the bulk of agricultural workers in India are not completely free in a strictly economic sense; are not the untrammelled owners for their capacity for labour; and are still subject to forms of pre-capitalist exploitation; that

land monopoly, rack-renting of tenants, exploitation of the rural labour by imposing on them destitute wages, the practising of usury in different forms, the discriminatory wage allocations on the basis of caste to the farm servants and labourers, the exploitation of women labour by paying half or one-third of men's wages for the same work, and the denial of access to certain castes and tribes of the use of the common tanks, wells and other communal properties etc. are nothing but feudal in character.<sup>38</sup>

Both the poor tenants and the agricultural workers are objectively interested in abolishing landlordism of the feudal and capitalist type and in all its hues; form a motive force of the people's democratic revolution; and must be aroused in an agrarian revolutionary struggle.

Under these circumstances, the law of the theoretical 'twilight range' cannot be accepted, holding as it does that so far as relations of production are concerned, there is no qualitative difference between a poor tenant exploited by a landlord and a wage-worker exploited by a landlord, capitalist farmer or rich peasant; which muddles up matters by seeing, in its fetishism, only the relations between things and not the relation between classes involved in production and which rejects the applicability of the Marxist-Leninist class analysis to this situation and applies a 'creative-empirical' approach which holds that the forms of exploitation in this case are neither feudal nor capitalist, but must be recognized as 'unique.' What must be rejected most emphatically is the logical conclusion drawn explicitly by Jairus Banaji:<sup>39</sup> the growing expropriation of the colonial peasantry did not lead to the constitution of a proletariat, which Lenin saw and hailed as an advanced trend of the greatest international revolutionary significance as early as in 1908,<sup>40</sup> but led merely to the constitution of a rural semi-proletariat and an urban or suburban *lumpenproletariat*, which was marked and incurably afflicted with the "peculiarly retrograde or backward" character of colonial exploitation.

To reiterate: Marxist-Leninists pay the closest attention to the complexity of agrarian relations under a remarkable variety of natural and socio-economic conditions in India; to the development of the capitalist mode of production enmeshed in a web of feudal and semi-feudal relations; and to the feudal and semi-feudal exploitation of various strata of the peasantry, including the agricultural wage workers. While studying the *differentiation among the peasantry*<sup>41</sup> and the trend of proletarianization, they

refer to the rural proletariat and the semi-proletariat.<sup>42</sup> But they do not confuse one class with another, or become submerged in details of secondary importance, so that the entire trend is missed.

While appreciating the importance of studying the evidence on the development of the bourgeoisie in the agriculture of a backward country such as India, it must be admitted that no detailed or specialized research has been done on this trend enabling one to respond to Utsa Patnaik's challenge to produce "direct empirical data." However, the CPI (M)'s analysis of the agrarian situation; Prakash Karat's study on agrarian relations in Malabar between 1925 and 1948<sup>43</sup> based on direct data gathered by him; and the "Survey on Agrarian Structure and Social Change in Selected Villages in Kerala: A Pilot Study of Three Villages" conducted by the Indian School of Social Sciences, Trivandrum<sup>44</sup> have all employed the Marxist-Leninist stand, viewpoint and method in this field.

While pointing out that Utsa Patnaik's specialized study throws light on this question and on the diversity of forms the capitalist relation assumes, I reject as superficial her conclusion that under colonialism the historical process which created a class of wage-workers "did not have as its counterpart the accumulation of surplus value by an indigenous class of agricultural capitalists." I concur with Paresh Chattopadhyay in holding that *there can be no wage-labour without the existence of capital at the other pole*, and that no amount of flashy theorizing about the 'metropolis-satellite' relationship can disprove the reality of this law. ✓

The earlier communication pointed out that Utsa Patnaik has arbitrarily set up for herself some 'criteria' for capitalism which are outside the Marxist-Leninist theoretical position and outlook. It is clear from her reply that she continues to labour under the illusion that she has discovered a 'unique' mode of production in agriculture, *which is neither feudal nor capitalist*, which must be properly classified as 'colonial', and which is inhabited by such shadowy categories as 'dominant landholders' (who are neither landlords, feudal or capitalist, nor capitalist investors) and 'normally free' wage labourers (who are qualitatively no different from poor tenants, are not involved in capitalist or feudal relations and are somehow relevant mainly to the sphere of circulation).

We might, or might not, have a correct appreciation of a particular question; we might, or might not, be able to produce original direct data to answer that question. But the choice before us is clear: *Either* Marxism-Leninism in theory and in practice. *Or* an eclecticism which uses the label of Marxism, accommodates the vulgarisms of Mandel or Althusser or whoever else might be in fashion, and robs the revolutionary theory of its substance.

N RAM

<sup>1</sup> A G Frank, Bipan Chandra and AK Bagchi are three of the leading spokesmen of this academic trend.

- <sup>2</sup> Utsa Patnaik, "On the Mode of Production in Indian Agriculture: A Reply" *Economic and Political Weekly*, Review of Agriculture, September 30, 1972 p A-148.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>4</sup> Paresh Chattopadhyay, "Mode of Production in Indian Agriculture: An Anti-Kritik", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Review of Agriculture, December 30, 1972 p A-189.
- <sup>5</sup> "India, on the other hand, never saw an integrated development of capitalist production relations and generalized commodity production, out of the internal contradictions of its precapitalist mode...We find that generalized commodity production was *imposed* from outside in the process of imperialist exploitation itself: India was forced to enter the network of world capitalist exchange relations..." Utsa Patnaik, cited above, p A-148-49). Also note the statement that under colonialism, even in its imperialist phase: "the process which created a large class of agricultural labourers in India did not have as its counterpart the accumulation of surplus values by an *indigenous* class of agricultural capitalists but served to prop up the capitalist mode in the metropolis while maintaining the traditional forms of surplus extraction and utilization within the agrarian sector of the colony." (Utsa Patnaik, *Social Scientist*, No 13, August 1973, p 57).
- <sup>6</sup> Lenin, "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up," *Collected Works*, Vol 22 p 337, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1964.
- <sup>7</sup> Stalin, "The Political Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East," *Works* Vol 7, p 147-148. Note his statement: "...in some of these countries, India for example, capitalism is growing at a rapid rate, giving rise to and moulding a more or less numerous class of local proletarians."
- <sup>8</sup> *Economic and Political Weekly*, December 23, 1972.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p 2499.
- <sup>10</sup> Utsa Patnaik's Communication "Development of Capitalist Production in Agriculture" *Social Scientist*, No 13, August, 1973, pp 63-64.
- <sup>11</sup> Paresh Chattopadhyay discusses most enthusiastically the "pathbreaking work" of Bettelheim (two books) which, in his opinion, 'corrects' Stalin's 'traditional' theoretical understanding of the commodity value categories in transitional social formations; really constitutes a 'great leap forward' in Marxian studies; and is "in its own right a *creative* development of Marxist-Leninism in its application to the analysis of the economic problems of the transitional society". ("On the Political Economy of the Transition Period", *Monthly Review*, September 1972, pp 16 & 26-27) Paresh Chattopadhyay has apparently no disagreement also with Althusser's 'Marxism' and is, in fact, highly appreciative of his 'methodology'. (See Paresh Chattopadhyay, "On the Question of the Mode of Production in Indian Agriculture: A Preliminary Note", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Review of Agriculture, March 25, 1972). 'Empathy' with the French economist and the French philosopher—in a language which he knows excellently—constitutes a readily identifiable blind spot in Paresh Chattopadhyay's 'Marxist-Leninist' vision.
- <sup>12</sup> Louis Althusser's collection of articles, *For Marx* (Translated by Ben Brewster, Penguin Books, 1969), is a particularly obscure, metaphysi-

cal and woolly attempt to rob revolutionary Marxism-Leninism of its substance, blunting its edge, vulgarizing it and coating it with the 'leftish' rhetoric for which Trotsky is so much admired by his followers. (For a forceful critique of Althusser, see Maurice Cornforth's article, "Some Comments on Louis Althusser's Reply to John Lewis", in *Marxism Today*, May 1973.) It is difficult to see how Pares Chatteropadhyay, or even Utsa Patnaik, can reconcile the crass attacks on Stalin and 'Stalinist dogmatism' by Althusser of the 'Maoist persuasion' with the well-known recognition and defence by the Communist Party of China and by Mao Tse-tung of Stalin's great historical rôle as a Marxist-Leninist and as a teacher and leader of the working class. Starting from an attack on 'Stalinist dogmatism' and on the 'political distortion' of 'Marxist concepts', Althusser constructs a metaphysic of the relation between theory and life which goes against the grain of Marxism-Leninism. He contrasts the Marxist 'scientific concepts' (which he upholds with all his heart) with the 'ideological concepts' obtaining in practice (which he sees as entirely opposed to science or theory). He denies precisely the Marxist theory of knowledge, the unity that Marxism-Leninism achieves between scientific theory and practice: "we can say that ideology, as a system of representations, is distinguished from science in that in it the practico-social function is more important than the theoretical function (function as knowledge)." (p 231, *For Marx*). He rejects as 'confusion' and as a 'political trap', the identification and merging of the Marxist *political positions*, with the theoretical *positions*: "This distinction is essential if we are to avoid the *political trap* of confusing Marx's theoretical positions with his *political* positions, and justifying the former from the latter." (*Ibid.*, pp 159-160). Althusser's whole attempt is, thus, to create a gulf between Marxist theory and practice; between concepts and life; between the theoretical-conceptual position and the class position; between science and theory on the one hand, and ideology and politics on the other. Althusser attempts to install a 'Marxist science' without its *working-class and partisan outlook and politics*. Utsa Patnaik is, of course, strongly influenced by the Althusserian theory of knowledge which comes trailing clouds of glorious "rigour; a rigorous conception of Marxist concepts, their implications and their development; a rigorous conception and investigation of what appertains to them in particular, that is, what distinguishes them once and for all from their phantoms," (*Ibid.*, p 116).

- 13 Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, p 195, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1970.
- 14 Lenin, "Capitalism in Agriculture", *Collected Works*, Vol 4, p 111.
- 15 Marx, *Capital*, Vol 3, p 802, cited by Utsa Patnaik in her communication in *Social Scientist* No 13, p 65.
- 16 See *Programme* of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), especially the section titled "Balance Sheet of Bourgeois Agrarian Policies," paras 34-36; the resolution of the Central Committee of the CPI (M), "Tasks on the Kisan Front", 1966 and the

resolution adopted in March 1973, titled "Central Committee Resolution on Certain Agrarian Issues."

- 17 Utsa Patnaik, Communication in *Social Scientist*, No 13, p 65.
- 18 See Lenin, "The Development of Capitalism in Russia," *Collected Works*, Vol 3; "To the Rural Poor," Vol 6; Mao Tse-tung, "Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society," *Selected Works*, Vol 1, Foreign Languages Press, Peking 1967; "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan," Vol 1; and "How to Differentiate the Classes in the Rural Areas," Vol 1.
- 19 Cited by Utsa Patnaik, *Social Scientist*, No 13, p 63.
- 20 "Mode of Production in Indian Agriculture," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Review of Agriculture, December 30, 1972.
- 21 Marx, "Appendices: Introduction," *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, pp 188-217, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1970.
- 22 Marx, "Preface" *Ibid.*, p 21.
- 23 See Marx, "Appendices: Introduction," *Ibid.*, p 192.
- 24 Marx, *Ibid.*, cited by Paresh Chattopadhyay, *Economic and Political Weekly*, December 30, 1972, p A-185.
- 25 See Utsa Patnaik, *Social Scientist*, No 13, p 64.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p 55.
- 27 See Utsa Patnaik, *Social Scientist* No 2, September 1972, pp 17-22. In her communication in *Social Scientist*, No 13, she continues to refer to the "employer-labour" relationship—which is neither feudal nor capitalist—and to deny the Marxist-Leninist classification of an agrarian proletariat in colonial India.
- 28 Lenin, "The Development of Capitalism in Russia," *Collected Works*, Vol 3, p 79.
- 29 See "Tasks on the Kisan Front," Central Committee Resolution of the CPI (M), paras 9 & 28.
- 30 "Circulation is merely a particular phase of exchange or of exchange regarded in its totality...The conclusion...is not that production, distribution, exchange and consumption are identical, but that they are links of a single whole, different aspects of one unit. Production is the decisive phase, both with regard to the contradictory aspects of production and with regard to the other phases...a distinct mode of production thus determines the specific mode of consumption, distribution, exchange and the *specific relations of these different phases to one another*...There is an interaction between the various aspects." (Marx, "Appendices: Introduction," *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, pp 204-205).
- 31 Lenin, "Capitalism in Agriculture," *Collected Works*, Vol 4, p 111.
- 32 Lenin, "The Development of Capitalism in Russia," *Collected Works*, Vol 3, p 178.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p 169.
- 34 Lenin, "New Data on the Laws Governing the Development of Capitalism in Agriculture," *Collected Works*, Vol 22, pp 46 & 101.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p 59.
- 36 The key question, as formulated by Marx, is whether these two essential conditions are met: For the conversion of his money into capital, therefore, the owner of money must meet in the market with the free labourer, free in the double sense, that as a free man he can dispose of his labour-power as his own commodity, and that on the other hand he has no other commodity for sale, is short of everything

- necessary for the realization of his labour-power." (*Capital*, Vol 1, p 169),
- 37 "Tasks on the Kisan Front, CPI (M) resolution cited above para 9.
- 38 *Ibid.*, para 20.
- 39 Jairus Banaji, "For a Theory of Colonial Modes of Production", *Economic and Political Weekly*, December 23, 1972, especially p 2501.
- 40 Lenin, "Inflammable Material in World Politics", *Collected Works*, Vol 15. See also "The Awakening of Asia" and "Backward Europe and Advanced Asia," Vol 19 and "To the Indian Revolutionary Association" and "Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions to the Second Congress of the Communist International", Vol 31.
- 41 Note in this connection the profound meaning of Lenin's statement: "The main trends of peasant differentiation are one thing; the forms it assumes, depending on the different local conditions, are another." "The Development of Capitalism in Russia," *Collected Works*, Vol 3 p 145).
- 42 A good part of Lenin's discussion of the differentiation of the peasantry in the work cited above is devoted to "the real socio-economic significance of the bottom group of the peasantry". (*Collected Works*, Vol 4, p 93). Lenin refers to the fact that the lower middle peasantry "provides more workers than it hires", and to its "unstable character and its transitional position between the peasant bourgeoisie and the rural population". (*Ibid.*, p 93). As for the trend of pauperization among the poor peasantry, there can be no doubt about the Leninist theoretical and political conclusion: "in its relation to the other groups, in its scale of farming, which covers only part of the expenditure on maintaining the family, in its source of livelihood (sale of labour-power) and, lastly, in its standard of living, this group should be assigned to the *allotment-holding farm labourers and day labourers*." (*Collected Works*, Vol 3, pp 169-170). Lenin makes, in this connection, an extremely significant comment: "To prove that it is correct to assign the indigent peasants to the class of allotment-holding wage-workers, one must show how, and what sort of, peasants sell labour-power, but also how, and what sort of, employers buy labour-power." (*Collected Works*, Vol 3, p 177). The term, *semi-proletariat*, includes more than one section of the poor peasantry. It must be noted that this term is used by Marxists not as a substitute for concrete class analysis but precisely in order to facilitate it.
- 43 Prakash Karat, "Agrarian Relations in Malabar, 1925-1948," Parts I & II, *Social Scientist* Nos. 14 & 15.
- 44 See the unpublished *Preliminary Report* on the Survey, available at the library of the Indian School of Social Sciences, Trivandrum.

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## NOTE

### *Approach to Science and Technology Plan : A Critique*

EVEN some of the most 'scientific' technologists seem to believe, quite wrongly, that technology is applied science. Technology is as old as mankind; it grew with man in the process of production; it made man what he is. Science is, one can say, a derivative of technology, a recent phenomenon which has assumed a degree of independence. Today science implies 'know-why' and technology the 'know-how.' Science is available in a worldwide system of publications to anyone who knows the language. Technology is not so readily accessible because it must be learned by doing, it is embodied experience. Failure to understand this vital difference is one of the main drawbacks in our scientific and technological policy. As a result, science which produces knowledge and technology which produces wealth have both failed in India.

#### *Science and Technology Plan*

In his Foreword in 'An Approach to the Science and Technology Plan,' C Subramaniam declared:

It is the conviction of the government that if science and technology are to make an impact on the quality of life in our country, then scientific and technological activity must and can, be planned and deliberately directed towards the fulfilment of national goals...for the first time in this country a Science and Technology Plan is being prepared by the NCST...<sup>1</sup>

Thus, at the very outset he preempts the question why the contribution of science and technology towards India's economic growth has been so negligible. Even the impact of imported technology on the overall economy of the nation is insignificant. The direct and indirect costs (due to deferred development in national science and technology), are heavy and should be counted.

Almost all the major units in our organized industry are based on foreign technical collaboration, know-how and machinery. There are a number of ways in which we are forced to pay for foreign collaboration such as collaboration fees, royalty, overpricing of tied-up machinery, spare

parts, raw materials and so on. These are the direct or explicit costs. The degradation caused by this policy in the field of scientific and technical research is so deep that the price we have to pay in indirect or implicit cost is even more.

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and the Department of Atomic Energy share between them, almost equally, about two thirds of the nation's research and development expenditure. The contribution of the R & D work done in institutions under the CSIR like patents, process-know-how and so on is pitifully small. For example, in 1967-68 the value of the output of processes leased out by CSIR laboratories was Rs50 million, less than one tenth of one per cent of the gross output of industry. The role of DAE is essentially reflected in nuclear power. The contribution of electricity towards gross national production is pretty small, less than half per cent and that of nuclear power still smaller. Thus nearly two thirds of our total research and development effort produces next to nothing. The other one third is distributed over agriculture, defence, health and the like and its contribution also is negligible. On the other hand all the big steel mills, fertilizer factories, heavy electrical and engineering works, refineries and so forth have together demanded not an iota of Indian scientific research and technological development. These establishments bring in innovations in science and technology exclusively from overseas. The contribution of *Indian* science and technology to our economic growth is practically nil or if at all, very insignificant.

Why such a state of affairs? Is it merely connected with the deficiencies in science and technology planning, the "inherently poor character of Indian research" and the "superiority of whiteman's brain"? Any attempt to find an answer within the framework of science and technology alone is bound to fail. For example, the NCST document complains: "What is this science for? What is the technology supposed to do? Neither question appears to have been asked in the past, at any rate not explicitly within our planning machinery."<sup>2</sup> It confesses that for the past twenty years it has been doing things not knowing what for, and still goes on analysing the deficiencies in our science policy such as 'the continued neglect of badly needed organizational and administrative reforms', 'the absence of an active agency to promote indigenous technology' and 'the communication gap between the industry and industrial research laboratory'.

Before proceeding further on a plan for science and technology we must have some agreement about the role of science and technology in the development of the country.

### *Role of Science and Technology*

Science or technology is not an end in itself. In the broader context there is only a single science, the science of history. To quote Marx, "One can look at history from two sides, and divide it into history of

nature and history of man. Both are inseparable." We are dealing with science, which is a history of nature and its usefulness to man. While it is true that science has got a cultural value element, by far its most important aspect is the role it plays in improving the comforts and living standards of the people. An excellent study, *The Role of Science and Technology in Developing Countries*, by Graham Jones has been published under the auspices of the International Council of Scientific Unions. It gives a fairly good account of the status of science and technology in the developing countries (Lesser Developed Countries: LDC, according to new terminology) including India. Its definition that "science policy is concerned essentially with the optimal use of science and technology as agents of economic growth and social development, taking the latter to include the advance of knowledge"<sup>3</sup> (the cultural element) is a fairly good starting point. However, the NCST is not satisfied with such an approach. Its definition is: "planning for the promotion of science and technology and their application to development and security of the nation."<sup>4</sup> The differences are quite clear. First, the NCST is still hesitant to recognize the organic interconnection between science and socio-economic progress. Secondly, added emphasis is given to 'security of the nation'. It is not clear whether the intention is to increase the importance of defence research, which is already high at 12 per cent,<sup>5</sup> with a view to joining 'the military club'. Graham Jones's definition, confines science as an agent of economic growth only. This means that

science policy is much more than a policy for scientific research, and cannot be treated in isolation. The aim is to set science and technology within the framework of national policies for the structural transformation of agriculture and industry. In this context development plans occupy a key position.<sup>6</sup>

### *Agriculture*

Within the framework of national policies, the impact of science and technology on our agricultural sector should have manifested itself in increased productivity based on a judicious use of better seeds, irrigation, fertilizers, pesticides and farming methods. In actual fact, overall agricultural productivity has recorded only a minor increase. Even the 'Green Revolution,' has run its course. It was associated with the use of high yielding variety of wheat which initially showed a promising growth rate. Wheat production nearly doubled in the last six or seven years. One element, seed, alone cannot make agricultural operation a success. Other elements like guaranteed irrigation, fertilizers, pesticides, farming methods, transportation and marketing facilities are also important. Only a minimal amount of comprehensive research has been done on these matters.

Our irrigation facilities are not sufficient in quantity and quality. Research on water management is scanty and utilization of underground water poor. We had adopted a policy of damming and storing surface water. This is good for snow-fed sources with perennial supply. For mon-

soon-fed rivers, a good many of them seasonal, there is the problem of empty reservoirs in the dry season, when water is badly needed for agriculture. So little work has been done on a cropping pattern compatible with water availability.

Though there had been a considerable increase in the supply of fertilizers during the past decade, we are still far short of requirements. Methods of application are also seldom scientific. In the use of pesticides, we follow the western route, with a clear time lag. For example, by the time DDT was banned in USA for its deleterious effects, we started using it! On crop rotation or farming methods, the average farmer is completely left to his own experience based on tradition. The market is oriented more to speculation than to production.

However, none of these perturbs our green revolutionaries. They are fired with the imagination of modernizing agriculture by use of science and technology symbolized by labour-saving machinery such as tractors and combines. Modernization to them means mechanization which is unsuitable for a country like India with its high level of unemployment. To quote Graham Jones,

If agriculture is to make its due contribution to reducing poverty, agricultural systems are needed which can make full use of the rural labour force while offering maximum returns. Long term economic growth as well as the welfare of the rural majority who will necessarily remain in agriculture for some time, may depend on an agricultural development strategy directed at raising productivity of the existing small-scale labour-intensive agriculture.<sup>7</sup>

Compare this with the present Indian strategy of concentrating upon 'those farmers who have the capacity to make the necessary inputs'. This brings to the fore another important factor, agrarian relations. There can be no meaningful application of science and technology to agriculture without solving the basic problem of land relations. Even after two decades of experience our planners have not recognized this fact.

This point has been stressed ever so many times by Graham Jones : One of the strongest obstacles to the application of new technology in many countries is the system of land tenure...Improved tenure is often basic to the fuller exploitation of agricultural resources... The question of agrarian reform is a highly intricate, essentially political problem...In the context of improving technology two of the most important aspects may be noted, namely, security of tenure and size of holding. Either communal or feudal forms of tenure may hinder development by not allowing a farmer a fair share of the fruit of his labour, or the security to encourage productive investment...Land reform, like any other form of income redistribution may not be compatible in the short term with maintaining a favourable investment climate for private capital. The need for agrarian reform, whether for social and political reasons or to further economic development,

must be considered in each country. More equitable land tenure will not only generate greater production incentives, but can lead to an increase in consumer capacity of the great mass of rural population. Erratic or indecisive policies, however, can do more harm than good. For example...the limited and unstable changes in India may have had the opposite effect, and may have encouraged landlords to consolidate their holdings and eject the tenants.<sup>8</sup>

This is true and we know it. However the approach document of NCST, though it places agriculture first in the areas of prime importance of the science and technology plan has absolutely nothing to say about this most important point. It is concerned with everything else, irrigation, storage, soil conservation, pesticides, seeds and so forth, but not with land reform.

### *Industry*

The contribution of industry towards our net domestic product is only of the order of twenty per cent. For example, the net domestic product for the year 1969-70 is Rs. 31,432 (18,132 at '60-61 prices) crores of which:<sup>9</sup>

	Rs Crores	Per cent
Mining and quarrying accounted for	339	1.08
Manufacture (Registered) "	2483	7.90
" (Unregistered) "	1694	5.40
Construction "	1485	4.72
Electricity, gas, water "	266	0.85

The unregistered units, are all more or less traditional establishments in the small-scale and cottage industry sector. Science has been of little or no use to them. Even in quarrying, construction, gas and water, a good lot continues in the same old way without being fed the results of scientific research, and without any improvement in productivity. Only the large manufacturing industries and part of mining can be said to be based upon modern science and technology. This includes both public sector enterprises and private industry: chemicals, ferrous and non-ferrous metals, electrical machinery, machine tools and machinery, consumer goods and so on. Of the 91 public sector enterprises listed by Jaiswal,<sup>10</sup> each and every one is based either wholly on foreign science and technology (turn-key collaboration) or partly on imported machinery and borrowed know-how. There is not a single enterprise based either on know-how or machinery developed in India. The total investment on 85 companies as on March 31, 1969 was Rs 3902 crores of which 11 companies contributed 72.6 percent.

	Rs Crores	Per cent
1. Hindustan Steel Ltd. (Collaboration: W. Germany (Rourkela) USSR (Bhilai) UK (Durgapur)	1099	28.2
2. Bokharo Steel Ltd. (USSR)	206	5.3
3. Heavy Engineering Corporation (USSR, Czechoslovakia)	224	5.7
4. Hindustan Aeronautics (UK, France, USSR)	197	5.0
5. Oil and Natural Gas Commission	180	4.8
6. National Coal Development Corporation	178	4.6
7. Neyveli Lignite Corporation (USSR)	173	4.4
8. Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd.	162	4.2
9. Fertilizer Corporation of India	155	4.0
10. Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (USSR, Rumania)	143	3.6
11. Heavy Electricals (India) Ltd.	112	2.8
Total in 11 Projects	<u>2838</u>	<u>72.6</u>

One notable feature is that for each industry there are several collaborators: UK, USSR and Germany in steel; USSR and Rumania in oil; UK and USSR in electricals, for example. It will be more appropriate to say that these are foreign plants operated by Indians. We have not really assimilated the corresponding technologies.

In the private sector the picture is worse. The first thing anybody does when he wants to start an industry is to look for a collaborator. Officially there are a number of restrictions on foreign collaboration, but in practice there are none if you belong to one of the favoured Indian monopoly houses, or if your collaborator is one of the reputable multinational corporations. Thousands of collaborations have come into existence during the past few years, in all sorts of forms and for all sorts of products. Be it cosmetics or chemicals, chocolate or soft drinks, metals or machines, there are scores of collaborations. It will be difficult to justify this tendency either financially or technologically. Of course one has to acknowledge that there are still such champions of foreign technology, as Ashok V Desai, who has conducted 'elaborate surveys' to explode some widespread 'fallacies' like "collaborations are invariably harmful to indigenous research and development."<sup>11</sup> He wants us to believe that

(1) because India's share in the import of technology and capital from developed countries is only a small fraction of the world export of technology and capital, there is absolutely nothing to be worried about it (how big this 'small fraction' is in relation to indigenous technology and capital is of no concern to him);

(2) our industry should be free to choose and import 'high quality' technology to enable it to compete in the international market with the very sellers of these technologies;

(3) any restriction on the import of technology will drastically reduce our foreign export 'capabilities.' Presently the share of the produc-

tion of 'imported high quality' technology in our exports is less than a fraction of one per cent);

(4) know-how from Indian laboratories (government-owned, as there is no private research in this country) is obsolete, prototypes costly, technical services poor and hence private industry's preference for imported technology is fully justified.

Restriction on import of technology will lower our industrial exports. He argues:

Technology in this country will lag further behind world technology; which essentially means higher input-output ratios, higher costs and lower quality in relation to those abroad...further, blanket restrictions on import of technology will reduce the competitive pressure to obtain and apply new technology.

.. the highest cost and lower quality of products will lead to lowering of industrial exports. Hence the foreign exchange bottleneck to growth will be more severe.

If we take the total value of the output of a wide range of goods produced in collaborative industry, from tooth paste and face powder to chemicals and switch gear, only a microscopic fraction is being exported. Most of these industries are geared to the production of consumer goods for the minority of urban and rural rich whose appetite has been whetted to the erotic tastes of the developed countries.

Having raised the question of technology two points call for detailed discussion: first, what should be the strategy in the selection of technology for national development and second, how can the science and technology plan be integrated with the overall socio-economic plans.

### *Choice of Technology*

The NCST approach document states:

A technology does not exist in isolation. It grows out of, and is closely fitted to, the technologies, resource endowments and pool of human skills already existing in the economic structure of a nation where the technology is developed. But the technologies that comprise our economic structure, particularly in the industrial sector are essentially transplants from industrially advanced nations. Our resource endowments, on the other hand, are different from those existing in the industrialized nations. In particular, we have an abundance of manpower whose skill endowments do not match with the requirements of the industrial technologies we possess. We are also short of capital and our effective markets are much smaller than those in the highly industrialized countries. In consequence, questions of appropriateness have arisen in the context of technologies.<sup>18</sup>

We can see similar arguments in the Graham Jones study also. For instance,

The transfer (of technology) becomes more innovative than an

initiative process. To the recipient society it is new technology, however much accepted in the disseminating society. In general, technological transfer and diffusion is a cultural, social and political process and *just not an imitation of manufacture...* The technologies of an advanced industrialized society have been developed in response to the needs and conditions of that society, particularly with regard to markets—normally large and with *comparatively high incomes*,...to resources and their comparative costs, high labour costs,... an adequate supply of capital and strong managerial and technical skills. It would be remarkable, therefore, if they proved optimal for a less developed society with plentiful unskilled labour, but with a shortage of capital and skills and usually small, low-income markets.<sup>14</sup> (Emphasis added)

The similarity in the analysis is quite obvious. But when it comes to conclusions we can notice the typically evasive nature of the approach document. Graham Jones emphatically concludes that “the best use of resources in lesser developed countries requires the development of both *efficient capital saving and efficient labour intensive techniques*. This is essential if capital is used more effectively and if the labour force is to be given useful employment.”<sup>15</sup> “In LDCs the most appropriate technologies are ‘capital saving’...Quite apart from the human and moral aspects of the problem it would be wasteful not to make the fullest use of the available labour potential.”<sup>16</sup>

As far as the authors of the approach document are concerned, “A judgement of the ‘appropriateness’ of a given package of technologies can only be made at the time of the project appraisal...A balanced approach requires us to use a judicious mix of technologies ranging from the ‘most capital intensive to those amenable to the utilization of organised labour.’”<sup>17</sup> This ‘judicious mix’ will be concocted by the industrial community headed by the monopoly houses. And we know what the nature of this ‘mix’ is going to be.

There is no doubt that our industry is predominantly collaboration-based. We import not only machines and materials, but also the entire process, know-how and design. Even the preparation of project reports, engineering designs, manufacturing drawings and maintenance manuals forms part of the collaboration agreements. The effect of this ‘technical collaboration’ on indigenous research and development needs careful examination.

### *Technical Collaboration and Indigenous R & D*

Our planners seem to entertain the notion that research and development can progress in scientists’ laboratories isolated from the economic life of society. Once laboratories are given necessary funds and equipment they are supposed to go ahead. But where to? Nobody seems to know the answer. There are only some general statements like, ‘science and technology should contribute to the economic development of the

nation' or 'it should help us to become self-reliant'. There was never any real demand from Indian industry on indigenous science and technology which has been rejected as second-rate or inferior. Industry finds it more profitable (to the industrialists, not to the nation) to go in for foreign technical and financial collaboration. Manufacturers enjoying a seller's market pay no attention to the nation's heavy losses in royalties, profit repatriation, high-priced equipment, imported raw materials and so on. They can dictate the prices. And the policies of the government, if one is to judge by the results, were totally inadequate to rectify the situation. As a result, the situation today and during all these years, has been that Indian industry does not expect or want anything from indigenous research and development. Almost the entire research work in this country is financed by government funds. The CSIR, AEC, ICAR, ICMR and other agencies get their annual doles and nobody asks them what they are doing with the money. As a result,

Research organizations tend to be self-perpetuating, and may receive support with little regard to the value of their results. Funds often depend on the strength of the personality of the research director, rather than the particular contribution to the total effort.<sup>16</sup>

If the foregoing analysis is true for India with its high energy particle physics and space research, molecular biology and radiation sterilization and the like, the blame cannot be wholly laid on the research institutions alone. The main reason is the lack of integration and lack of will to bring it about, of research and development work with industrial plans. But for a few basic or ostentatious government industries, private enterprise, with an increasing degree of monopolization, controls the Indian industrial field. For all practical purposes, it operates outside the so-called plan framework, and scorns "government research."

Under such conditions, when the society (reflected, for this purpose through the industry) instead of demanding higher and higher excellence from its research and development workers, puts them off, every attempt to improve the quality of research is bound to fail.

The approach document seems to recognize this, but does not either know or is afraid to suggest the cures. It still feels that indigenous science and technology can be pushed into industry from outside by means of a 'government order', perhaps!

Under the socio-economic set-up prevailing in the country, where the right to unlimited profiteering and exploitation is the only fundamental right; where profit of the few is considered equivalent to the welfare of the nation; where the entire production philosophy is guided by two words 'easy money'; where the great majority of the productive labour potential is wasted without a qualm; where the objective result of the government policies has been the consolidation of the status quo, it is utterly futile to expect any radical transformation in the relationship between science and the economy.

### *Strategy*

To plan a strategy for research and development in science and technology in India we should understand first its basic limitations. According to Graham Jones,

New knowledge itself makes no contribution to economic growth, nor does an invention generated by scientific or technical advances. Only when the knowledge or invention is incorporated effectively into the production system can economic growth result. One of the key factors in growth is innovation, the culminating stage of the total scientific and economic effort.

In market economy terms this may be defined as the commercial exploitation of technical knowledge to win new markets, or hold existing ones against competition by reducing cost of production of conventional goods or introducing novel or more efficient goods.

Similarly, according to the terminology of planned economy, innovation involves intentional introduction of the achievements of science and technology into production to cut down production costs, to improve labour conditions and to speed up the general rates of economic growth, to meet the growing needs of the population.<sup>19</sup>

Ours is not a planned economy, whatever we may think about the Five Year Plans. We have never been able to introduce intentionally the achievements of science and technology even into public sector industry. We have been only transplanting foreign technology and machinery. The big industrial houses are out for the kill, using the technical financial help of foreign co-conspirators, sharing the loot with them. Let us see what the authors of the approach document have to say about this:

The first point to be borne in mind is that the price one pays for foreign technology is not in any way "fixed" by market for such technology. The market is a monopolistic one...

Secondly, the frequent tying of aid from the developed countries restricts the "market" from which technology can be bought—even in normal circumstances the cost of the items of technology from the aid-giving country may be high in relation to that available elsewhere. When the seller of technology is aware that the buyer is restricted by "tied aid" to his market area the price of technology invariably rises steeply. Furthermore, the technology imported under "tied aid" has, in the past, often been inappropriate or obsolete.

Thirdly, our private sector has, by and large, no compulsion to bargain with the suppliers of technology because, internally, it enjoys a seller's market and price is not the prime concern.

Fourthly, the public sector is *unable* to bargain for two reasons; those who negotiate agreements for imports of technology by the public sector often do not have the knowledge of the minutiae of the technology to estimate its value nor do they have the detailed knowledge about alternate sources of technology...<sup>20</sup>

This is a candid confession of the results of the policies we have been following. But what are we going to do about it?

There is no escape from total planning of the economy. Science and technology plan should form its integral part. The following strategy is suggested:

(a) *Implementation of Land Reforms* by abolition of landlordism of all sorts without compensation and distribution of surplus land. This will unleash the vast amount of rural creative energies and will not only make the nation self-sufficient in food and agricultural raw materials, but will also provide an ever-expanding market for industrial products. Implementation of land reforms should be the first step in modernizing and improving the productivity of agriculture. Irrigation should get the next priority without which all efforts on seeds, fertilizers or pesticides will fail. Labour-saving mechanization should be completely avoided till such time that substantial movement of labour power from agriculture to industry is facilitated.

(b) *Parallel reforms in the industrial sector* demand

(i) nationalization of all large industrial houses, both foreign and Indian;

(ii) cancellation of all collaboration agreements, technical as well as financial;

(iii) nationalization of all the imported know-how;

(iv) nationalization of foreign trade;

v) abrogation of all patents;

vi) redefinition of priorities in investment;

vii) reallocation and increase in research and development expenditure based on the above measures.

(c) To carry out and push forward the above reforms a new approach towards education and manpower planning will be required.

### *Science and Technology Plan*

Having created an environment in which science and technology will be inducted into, and not pushed from outside, the economic milieu, plans can be made more concrete.

#### *A. Agriculture*

Without building a sound base of agriculture which supports 80 per cent of our working population, there cannot be any development; the first step is to put an end to landlordism of all forms and divide agricultural land into family-size holdings. The tremendous energies of peasants and agricultural workers will act as a prime motive force for development. Instead of taking this road, our planners helped in enriching and strengthening the rich minority, and worsened the conditions in the countryside.

So far we have been paying scant attention to comprehensive agricultural research. Much of the research done is either too general, bordering on pure research, or too isolated, making it impossible to link up

with other factors in agriculture. What is required is to evolve complete packages of technology adapted to local conditions, including appropriate fertilizer-use techniques, adequate means of pest and disease control, together with the improved planting, cultivation and irrigation techniques. Here, at least in the initial stages, labour-saving tractorization has no relevance, and the present emphasis on it is to be discarded forthwith. Instead more intensive work should be done to locate ground water, a much surer source than surface water, and to supply electricity for wider utilization. Ponds, wells and minor dams should get preference over high capital major irrigation schemes. Extreme care should be taken to conserve the most scarce of all resources, capital.

Forestry is another field of economic importance. With abundant sunlight and water available, cultivated forests of chosen trees can prove to be of unexpected value. Very little research has been done in this field. So also is fishing and other marine resources. These three, agriculture, forestry and fishing, should form the stepping stones to economic growth.

### *B. Industry*

As far as industry is concerned, the main strategy is the use of capital-saving and labour-intensive techniques. This makes it possible to utilize the indigenously developed technologies, though they are less sophisticated, and of "lesser quality" than the foreign technologies. Only thus can we make use of our resources, physical and human; and forge the innovative chain linking scientific research, development design, tooling, first production and marketing of the new product. This is not to suggest that we should learn nothing from world experience and that we should invent everything ourselves. Links with the international scientific community can be maintained in many ways. As far as technologies are concerned, after nationalizing all the existing ones, if absolutely necessary, new technologies for new products (not for the old) could be purchased by the government and adapted to our needs. They should not become tools in the hands of private industry to exploit the people. As far as product mix is concerned, details are to be evolved on the basis of detailed plans. However one principle can be stated, namely, the curtailment of production of luxury consumption goods to a minimum.

### *C. Education*

No science and technology plan is workable without relating it to the general education scheme which at present benefits the select few from the economically privileged classes. This is the most inhibiting factor in scientific and technological advance: spread of education among the masses combined with an increasing emphasis on science education is an essential pre-requisite. Although a detailed discussion on education is outside the compass of this note, a general approach on the following lines is suggested:

(i) Free and compulsory education of seven years at the primary level should be made universal. The ultimate aim should be to extend this up to the Secondary School Leaving Certificate.

(ii) The purpose of general school education is to develop the child into a cultured citizen of the modern scientific age. SSLC should be sufficient for most of the administrative and other routine jobs.

(iii) Vocational education should be available, both after seven and ten years' schooling to supply the economy with trained and specialized artisans like fitters, welders and so on.

(iv) The purpose of university education should be mainly to provide teachers for schools and colleges and to create research workers and professionals like engineers or doctors.

#### *D. Research*

Today the amount we spend on scientific research is pitifully small though even that is not utilized properly. Lord Blacket rightly observes that "unless the internal resources spent by an LDC on research and development are wisely used, the country can be made poorer and not richer. Moreover, the reaction against science and modern technology may grow and could prove very damaging to the future of an LDC."<sup>21</sup>

Today most of the research work done in India is of the fundamental type. Even 'applied research' is vague in its application. Oriented research is practically nil, understandably so, as there is only desire for it and no demand. Scientists often show a preference for 'pure' research. "This may lead not only to individual achievements, but may contribute to national prestige and esteem. A Nobel Prize may be comparable in satisfaction to an Olympic Gold Medal, though neither may increase the standard of living...In LDCs the primary emphasis needs to be on applied research."<sup>22</sup>

This advice is most relevant to India.

As pointed out earlier, nearly two thirds of the research expenditure is incurred by laboratories under CSIR and DAE and more than 90 per cent of the research done in these laboratories is of low priority and unrelated to the country's needs. For example, the importance given to space and atomic research is beyond all reasoning. There is an over-emphasis on the economic role of space research. The "concern for the self-reliance in space vehicle and satellite fabrication technology" while more than 95 per cent of the infrastructure comprising of intermediate goods, instruments, machinery etc. is dependent on foreign countries in technology, process know-how, spare parts and raw materials sounds highly irrational. As for atomic research, its relevance is only with regard to its contribution to the power programme. The mid-term appraisal of the Fourth Plan gives the revised allocation of research funds as follows:

	Rs. Crores	
	Original provision	Revised provision
DAE	67.48	118.66
of which: Reactor Research Centre, Kalpakom	15.00	25.00
Bhabha Atomic Research Centre	15.57	15.60
Variable Energy Cyclotron	5.18	6.18
Space Research	15.02	52.81
Housing	9.00	9.00
Atomic Minerals Division	1.30	2.00
Radio Telescope	0.24	0.32
Electronics Committee	0.50	—
Aided Institutes	5.67	7.75
Total	67.48	118.66

Against this, the scores of laboratories under CSIR together get only Rs 50 crores. Even this amount may not be spent. Thus space research takes precedence over research in metals, minerals, power, chemicals, irrigation and so on. No developed country has allocated such a huge chunk of its research funds to space and nuclear power programme.

Atom, space, cosmic rays, molecular biology and so on offer highly exciting horizons of fundamental research. But it is wrong to assume that a nation can economically prosper if fundamental research is given prime importance. The example of Japan is sufficient to prove this. They have done a modicum of fundamental research while essentially concentrating on problem-oriented science and technology.

Our policy should be application-oriented research. The national laboratories including institutions under DAE should be entrusted with development work and be made answerable for all the lapses. Every organization should direct its working potential solely towards the execution of the work entrusted to it and this will be substantial under the suggested new policy on collaboration. While fundamental research should largely be assigned to the universities and teaching institutions, it is imperative that it is closely related to work-oriented schemes and practical problems. Scientific research, theoretical and applied (to the life of the nation) is indivisible.

M P PARAMESWARAN

<sup>1</sup> National Committee on Science and Technology, *An Approach to the Science and Technology Plan*, New Delhi, January 1973.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p 19.

<sup>3</sup> Graham Jones, *The Role of Science and Technology in Developing Countries*, Oxford University Press, 1971, p 34.

<sup>4</sup> NCST, *op. cit.*, p 59.

<sup>5</sup> NCST, *op. cit.*, p 19.

<sup>6</sup> Graham Jones, *op. cit.*, p 16.

- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p 63.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 86-89.
- <sup>9</sup> *Statistical Abstracts of India*, 1970, p 480.
- <sup>10</sup> Jaiswal, *Public Sector Undertaking*.
- <sup>11</sup> NCAER, *Foreign Technology and Investment*, New Delhi 1971.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p 52.
- <sup>13</sup> NCST, *op. cit.*, p 30.
- <sup>14</sup> Graham Jones, *op. cit.*, p 21, 24.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p 159.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p 127.
- <sup>17</sup> NCST, *op. cit.*, p 31.
- <sup>18</sup> Graham Jones, *op. cit.*, p 32.
- <sup>19</sup> Graham Jones, *op. cit.*, p 8.
- <sup>20</sup> NCST, *op. cit.*
- <sup>21</sup> Graham Jones, *op. cit.*, p xii.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p 51.

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Review Article*

### *Science And Social Change*

A RAHMAN *et al*, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN INDIA, Indian Council of Cultural Affairs, 1973, pp 236, Rs 30.

AN almost universal recognition of science as 'social' activity, in the sense that it not only affects society but is also affected and moulded by it, is of recent origin. This is not to say that science, prior to this admission, was not a social activity; an explicit recognition of this nature makes it necessary to view the development of science as a complex social phenomenon. Science itself must now be seen as a specific social institution subject to specific rules and hence capable of being planned. This recognition has gained currency largely due to the fact that science, via technology, has acquired a major role as a force of production in the contemporary world.

Recent scientific discoveries have given birth to qualitatively new technological processes, bringing into existence new branches of industry and lines of production. With the shortening of the interval between a scientific discovery and its practical application, the link between science and technology has been so firmly established that it is impossible to conceive of one without the other. The study of the specific relation between science and technology in specific social conditions provides a framework within which the achievements and failures of science and technology can be properly assessed.

Natural scientists and social scientists are agreed that science and technology create material conditions which necessitate a process of social transformation. However, the controversial point is the mechanics of this process of transformation. A much publicized school of thought advances the view that science and technology automatically bring about a social transformation. The concept of the 'industrial society' is characteristic of this approach. The theorists of this school contend that so-called 'capita-

list' and 'socialist' societies are merely variants of the 'industrial society' which would converge in due course of time under the impact of the scientific and technological revolution.

The basic assumption of these theorists is that the nature of the relations of production is inconsequential as far as the development of science and technology and their social consequences are concerned. They exaggerate the role, and hence distort the significance, of the introduction of three major factors in the capitalist system under the impact of science and technology: increasing socialization of the production process; growing economic role of the state; and the introduction of the elements of planning.

The convergence theory mentioned above is plainly unsound when we take note of the fact that while production itself is increasingly socialized, in capitalist societies appropriation is private and is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands sharpening the contradictions of the system. In this context the open economic role of the state reflects the severity of the crisis of monopoly capital and not a socialization of appropriation. Equally, the introduction of planning in certain sectors of the economy does not lead to rationalization of production, for market conditions and profit continue to be the determining factors. These concrete conditions account for the sharp difference in the material and spiritual lives of the common people of the capitalist and the socialist countries. Science and technology, which have enhanced the possibilities for the latter, have accentuated the contradictions for the former.

A variant of the 'industrial society' approach is used by A Rahman and others in their book *Science and Technology in India*. The book considers the quantitative growth of the scientific technological infrastructure as a measure of the effectiveness of scientific endeavour for social and economic development. The authors contend that the infrastructure built, priorities set and resources provided by the British Indian Government, though intended 'to ensure the military, administrative and economic control over India', led nonetheless to 'a viable infrastructure of science and technology' coming into existence. Contentions of this nature assume that the infrastructure of science and technology and their role in development are independent of the goals set for and pursued by science and technology. The science policy followed in independent India has maintained the continuity of the organizational structure conceived and established by the British.

Constant references to 'advanced countries' and 'industry in the West' while no mention is even made of the existence of the socialist mode of production and development, reveal the bias of the authors. The lessons drawn and the comparisons made are, oddly enough, with 'the advanced countries of the West' who have had the "advantage of being acclimatized to the situation over the years, having grown with contemporary science." There is no attempt to take note of, let alone learn from,

the experience of those countries that have been able to overcome age-old backwardness without having this advantage.

It is not surprising therefore that there is no data or information in the book on the nature of aid received from the socialist countries. The heavily foot-noted book carries no reference to the substantial literature on various aspects of science planning from the socialist countries.

While the apologists and official scientists of the capitalist countries, where science and technology are used in the service of private profit, discover new conceptual frameworks to justify their position, their counterparts in the developing countries feel content just to borrow. The scandal of the National Council for Science and Technology plagiarizing from the Sussex Study Team Reports only highlights a common trend. The present study is no exception. The definition of science policy (p 86); the identification of factors and objectives of science policy (p 87); and the role of private industry in R & D (p 124) are directly taken from foreign authors or UNESCO Reports. The book amply reflects the weakness of Indian academics who decry any attempt to evolve conceptual framework or methodology in the name of pragmatism or a descriptive approach. It is little realized that analysis always proceeds in categories. The authors adopt, borrow and use categories whose implications they are not themselves fully aware of. In this study the authors state while discussing the method of planning: 'The planning of scientific and technological research in India may be contemplated at three levels, namely, the national level, organizational level and the institutional level' (p III). This is little more than a crude attempt to fit the existing agencies of planning into what merely appears to be a conceptual framework. The 'organizational' and 'institutional' levels are in many cases 'national' while the 'institutional' is subsumed under 'organizational'. This categorization is theoretically misleading and practically erroneous. Further, this has led the authors to make wrong and contradictory formulations. For example, we find this statement, "Western education was, in practice, open to all sections of society. The stress on science and experiments gave it a new direction." (p 24), followed in the very next paragraph by a confounding paradox:

...the salient features of (Western Education) were imparting the education in English, limiting it to the needs of the colonial power, in terms of limiting it to a small section of the people to serve as clerks for the ruling power. Consequently, in such a scheme of things scientific and technical education neither received high priority nor adequate attention.

The historical perspective provided in the first chapter under the same title is a chronological summary of various 'achievements' of science in three temporal categories: ancient, medieval and colonial. History is reduced to time, a unit of measurement, by devoiding it of its real content, namely, the men living under concrete socio-economic conditions and de-

veloping science and technology in their struggle against nature and other men in a framework of changing social institutions. Consequently, the growth and development of science is made to appear as a series of successes (or failures) of individuals.

History of science is the history of man's struggles against adverse forces of nature conducted under specific socio-economic formations both affecting and being affected by each other. A critical understanding of the process of interaction in its specificity between the whole gamut of social institutions and the development and growth of scientific activity, is what constitutes the historical perspective with the help of which the present processes can be understood better and planned.

There is a general misconception among science historians and science planners that historiography of science does not require a philosophy of science. This generally leads them to uncritical acceptance of a philosophy according to which scientific theories emerge from 'facts'—facts of individual discovery in isolation. Sacrificing scholarship, they take to a descriptive approach without any critical appreciation of what historically constitutes a 'fact.' The 'fact' of the absence of experimentation is therefore in this study, identified as the chief reason for the failure of Indian science. Very few seem to realize that experimentation as a conscious and purposeful link between thinking and the surrounding world, as an instrument of scientific cognition, develops only when the development of man's practical-critical activity has reached a certain level. Thus the book treats data and information as 'facts' which are then portrayed as an index of the growth and development of science, representing the viewpoint that radical changes in the socio-economic structure are not necessary for the continuation of the growth of science and technology.

This book provides the data and details on the development of various components of scientific and technological infrastructure without showing any concern about how, and for whose benefit, such a process of development has been initiated. Does the Indian economy provide employment opportunities for the increasing number of science and engineering graduates? Does the increasing financial outlay on R and D from the public exchequer help the Indian masses acquire their necessities of life? Have the obstacles in the growth of Indian science and technology anything to do with radical socio-economic change? All such questions are implicitly treated as irrelevant.

A purely verbal adherence, which we find in this book, to the view that science is a social activity is no substitute for a methodological approach which can comprehend a world where science-based technology has come to pervade and shape all dimensions of human life.

RAJENDRA PRASAD

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K MATHEW KURIAN

## *Marxism and Christianity*

"CHRISTIANITY, like every great revolutionary movement, was made by the masses", wrote Friedrich Engels.<sup>1</sup> Christianity, that is early Christianity, was the religious expression of an enslaved people struggling for emancipation. Like modern Socialism, Christianity "got hold of the masses" primarily because it provided the social consciousness for oppressed peoples who "opposed ruling systems", "the powers that be".<sup>2</sup>

The character of the Christian Church during the period of the decline of the Roman Empire was, however, not sustained for long. Early Christianity embodied "the outlook of an utterly despairing people after the numerous revolts of slaves, indignant people and enslaved nationalities against the yoke of the Roman Empire had been drowned in blood."<sup>3</sup> But, soon the Church became part and parcel of the feudal hierarchy and theology was suitably modified to accommodate alien values. 'Salvation' was detached from the motive force of enslaved and oppressed people in their fight against class oppression and exploitation. Instead it was elevated to the divine status of a pursuit of other-worldly goals. For all those who suffered the onslaught of a combined regime of feudal oligarchies and church hierarchies, religion and the theology of 'salvation' were offered as proxy for their real emancipation.

### *Marxist Critique of Religion*

The rise of religious beliefs in the early stages of human development are traced by Marx and Engels to the primitive man's helplessness in the struggle with the forces of nature. In class societies the social root of religion is the apparent helplessness of the working people, suffering under class oppression and exploitation, in their uneven fight against the exploiters and oppressors. The feeling of helplessness of the masses finds expression in idealistic and metaphysical beliefs, in a better life after death and rewards in heaven for the sufferings on earth.

Religion has been a powerful form of social consciousness, one of the effective elements of the superstructure of class society. Studies of the socio-economic formations in various parts of the world in the epochs of feudalism and capitalism reveal that the exploiting classes had a specific interest in fostering religion as a means for blunting the class consciousness of the people, as a means of keeping the masses in blindness or ignorance. It was against the backdrop of such a historical analysis that Marx wrote in 1844 that "Religion is the opium of the people."

Marx wrote:

Religious distress is at the same time the *expression* of real distress and the *protest* against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world; just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people.<sup>4</sup>

Karl Marx also stated:

*Man makes religion*, religion does not make man. In other words, religion is the self-consciousness and self-feeling of man who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again. But *man* is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the *world of man*, the state, society. This state, this society, produce religion, a *reversed world-consciousness*, because they are a *reversed world*. Religion is the general theory of that world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in a popular form, as spiritualistic *point d'honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn completion, its universal ground for consolation and justification . . .<sup>5</sup>

... It is the *fantastic realization* of the human essence because the *human essence* has no true reality. The struggle against religion is therefore mediately the fight against the *other world*, of which religion is the spiritual aroma.<sup>6</sup>

Again, "The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is required for their *real* happiness. The demand to give up the illusions about its condition is the *demand to give up a condition which needs illusions*. The criticism of religion is therefore *in embryo the criticism of the vale of woe*, the halo of which is religion."<sup>7</sup>

The task of history, according to Marx, is to establish the "truth of this world," and this can be done fully only when "the world beyond the truth" has disappeared. "The immediate task of philosophy, which is

at the service of history once the *saintly form* of human self-alienation has been unmasked, is to unmask self-alienation in its *unholy forms*. Thus the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of the earth, the *criticism of theology* into the *criticism of politics*.<sup>8</sup>

Engels gave us a lot of insight on the rise of Christianity during the period of the decline of the Roman Empire. He traced the historic conditions in which the social, political and ideological struggle of the oppressed peoples gave rise to Christianity as a religion.<sup>9</sup> Christianity, which was a religion of the oppressed masses in the early stages,<sup>10</sup> however, became churchified and institutionalized on the side of the oppressor.

The close relationship between the Church and feudalism in Europe has been well documented by the authors of Scientific Socialism. Engels in his book, *The Peasant War in Germany*, showed how in the middle ages the clergy obtained a monopoly on intellectual education, an education which was itself essentially theological. Engels wrote:

In the hands of the clergy, politics and jurisprudence, much like all other sciences, remained mere branches of theology, and were treated according to the principles prevailing in the latter. Church dogmas were at the same time political axioms. Even as a special estate of jurists was taking shape, jurisprudence long remained under the tutelage of theology. And this supremacy of theology in the entire realm of intellectual activity was at the same time an inevitable consequence of the place held by the Church as the most general synthesis and sanction of the existing feudal domination.<sup>11</sup>

Under such circumstances it was but natural that the struggle against feudalism became, of necessity, a struggle against the Church. Revolutionary doctrines which attempted to fight feudalism were naturally treated as theological heresies. "The existing social conditions had to be stripped of their halo of sanctity before they could be attacked".<sup>12</sup>

The conflicts between religions and revolutionary ideologies have a long history. Marxism or the revolutionary ideology of Scientific Socialism, developed not only as an indictment of capitalism and as a vision of a classless society, but also as a "discovery of man under the rubble of official Christianity".<sup>13</sup> Marxism gave a severe blow to all the exploitative power structures of capitalism and its value systems. It was in addition, a "terrible indictment of 'churchified', remote, middle-class laissez-faire Christianity"<sup>14</sup> and "an imputation of guilt laid at the door of a dessicated, saltless Christianity, riddled with ecclesiasticism."<sup>15</sup>

Marx and Engels showed the significant role played by eighteenth century materialists in France in the struggle against feudal oppression and religious obscurantism. They also showed the connection between the growth of materialist philosophy and the tremendous achievements in the field of natural sciences.<sup>16</sup> Atheism was part of the ideology accepted by the progressive social class at that period in history, the rising bourgeoisie. But as the bourgeoisie achieved power and the class struggle with the new

and rising social class—the proletariat—developed in full steam, the bourgeoisie which was once the champion of atheism and free thinking began to retreat and use religion as “an opiate of the people”.<sup>17</sup>

While acknowledging the positive contribution of the materialistic philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, most importantly Feuerbach, Marx and Engels criticized the limitations of their understanding, particularly the inability of bourgeois atheism to attack the social class roots of religion.<sup>18</sup> They have elaborated their critique of religion—their critique of the social roots of religion—in several works such as *Capital*, *Anti-Duhring* and *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*. According to Marxism, “all religion, however, is nothing but the fantastic reflection in men’s minds of those external forces which control their daily life, a reflection in which the terrestrial forces assume the form of supernatural forces”.<sup>19</sup>

Religion, including Christianity, has played, by and large, a negative or obstructive role in the growth of science and rational thinking. In *Dialectics of Nature*, Engels narrated the continuous struggle between science and religion and demonstrated the manner in which religion stood as an obstacle to the progress of science. Church history is replete with examples of hindrances placed by religious hierarchies to the development of scientific outlook and thought. Some of the greatest scientists in world history were persecuted by the Church. Scientists were subjected to all forms of cruelty and torture.

Many of them were burnt at the stake and their scientific works were destroyed. The inquisition introduced by the Catholic Church was used also against those who propagated scientific and rational ideas and values. In short, the Christian Church, which in its early days reflected the desperate mood of the slaves and the oppressed peoples, became an instrument in the hands of the oppressors and provided the philosophical justifications for the suppression of all democratic movements of the oppressed peoples. The revolutionary emancipation of natural science from theology started from the publication of the immortal work of Copernicus who, in the words of Engels, “though timidly and, so to speak, only from his death-bed, threw down the gauntlet to ecclesiastical authority in the affairs of nature”.<sup>20</sup>

Who can deny the fact that in the past many religious establishments tried to protect the existing exploitative order of society, promising “rewards in heaven for enduring the pain of earth, thus stifling all attempts to change the real social conditions of this world”?<sup>21</sup>

### *Apparent Similarities*

There are certain apparent similarities between Marxism and Christianity which have led many theologians as well as some philosophers using Marxist ‘schema’ to draw wrong conclusions. One such apparent similarity relates to the historical vision of human progress. It has been argued that both Christians and Marxists have a historical point of view

and know, "however obscurely", the goal towards which the human society is moving.<sup>22</sup>

The apparent similarity can be misleading. The crucial question relates to the content and the basis of the two world views. Many Christian theologians base their historical world view on the doctrine of Providence. Christopher Dawson, for instance, asserts:

Whatever else is obscure, it is certain that God is the governor of the universe and behind the apparent disorder and confusion of history there is the creative action of the divine law. Man is a free agent and is continuously attempting to shape the world and the course of history to his own designs and interests. But behind the weak power and the blind science of man, there is the overruling purpose of God which uses man and his kingdoms and empires for ends of which he knows nothing and which are often the opposite of those which man desires and seeks to attain.<sup>23</sup>

Of course, the doctrine of Divine Providence, theologians would argue, need not be (or should not be) conceived of in terms of a fatalistic philosophy. They would argue that obedience to God does not mean the complete negation of individual initiative. While rejecting blind fatalism, they assert the principle of divine revelation, thus admitting the "possibility of human cooperation with the divine purpose".<sup>24</sup>

It must be stated, at the very outset, that Marxist understanding of history has nothing in common with the metaphysical and idealistic conception of history. Marxism rejects the assertion regarding Divine Providence. Marxist world outlook is based on dialectical and historical materialism, on an understanding of the concrete manner in which socio-economic formations have developed in various parts of the world from primitive communal society to the present-day capitalism and socialism. Marxism is concerned with a vision of the future based on an objective assessment of the laws of motion of human societies through concrete historical situations and stages.

Marxism rejects the theological affirmations of Christianity. Marxist materialist philosophy negates the idealistic philosophical position that reality consists essentially of incorporeal essences or ideas. Marxism, as a philosophy of dialectical and historical materialism, rejects all religious systems, including Christianity, based on ideas of 'divine providence' and 'transcendental reality'. In this respect, it is clear that Marxism and Christianity cannot be reconciled with each other in terms of philosophy (or theology) or world outlook.

### *Salvation or Liberation*

The concept of 'salvation' in the early stages of the Christian Church, marked by a revolutionary practice of struggle against slavery, was quite close to the modern political concept of 'emancipation' or 'liberation', despite the basic differences in terms of Christian eschatology. However, as the Church institutionalized and petrified on the side of the exploiting

classes, the concept of 'salvation' also acquired new theological meanings unknown in the early period.

Such a transformation of the early Christians' understanding of 'salvation' was facilitated, in no small measure, by the authors of the New Testament. Mark and Matthew were essentially preachers and they wrote their gospels to maintain the pastoral tradition rather than to develop an authentic history. Only Luke made an attempt to present a work of history. All of them, however, were not concerned with history as such; they were primarily concerned with interpreting events and expressing themselves in terms of the Jewish tradition. Christian community was accepted as the goal and consummation of the history of salvation.

We find in the New Testament a curious combination of the Old Testament view of history and the apocalyptic view, though the latter predominates. Salvation, according to the Old Testament, is equated to the welfare of the people, and the realization of God's promise is "conditional on the obedience of the people."<sup>25</sup> Unlike in the Old Testament view, where "the responsibility of the individual coincides with the responsibility of the whole people", in the apocalyptic view, "the individual is responsible for himself only, because the end will bring welfare and judgement at the same time, and each individual will receive good or evil according to his works, according to what he has done in the body."<sup>26</sup>

It is maintained by most theologians that the reign of God which Jesus proclaimed is the eschatological reign; whether the reign of God was considered by him as immediately imminent or as present in his person (realized eschatology) is, of course, a matter of dispute among them. Salvation is interpreted in theology as the *eschatological event*. Jesus Christ signifies the end of the old world, so far as the believer is concerned, and the beginning of a new life is Christ. As Rudolf Bultmann has interpreted,

It is the paradox of the christian message that the eschatological event, according to Paul and John, is not to be understood as a dramatic cosmic catastrophe but as happening within history beginning with the appearance of Jesus Christ and in continuity with this occurring again and again in history, but not as the kind of historical development which can be confirmed by any historian. It becomes an event repeatedly in preaching and faith.<sup>27</sup>

The dominant theological understanding of 'salvation' maintained and propagated by the organized Christian Church in all class societies, however, has been a personalized, other-worldly, mystical understanding. For many Christians, religion has been, by and large, a private affair. "Permeated by a drawing room atmosphere, the practice of faith was nearly always relegated to a man's closet or confined within the walls of some sacred edifice".<sup>28</sup> 'Salvation' has been equated to a selfish pursuit

of ensuring an abode in heaven through personal acts of repentance and divine grace, devoid of any real commitment to social action. The concept of 'sin', in any case, is crucial to an understanding of the Christian theology of 'salvation'.

The root of moral evil for the Christian is something interior to man's will. It will therefore persist, so long as man remains a fallen creature. Whatever revolution takes place in the structure of society, it will not eliminate this. Sin alienates man from God. The alienation is overcome, not through man's becoming sinless, but through his sins being forgiven.<sup>20</sup>

The concept of 'salvation' which developed in the epoch of the early Christians' struggle against the slave system, could no longer be acceptable to a Church hierarchy in the epoch of feudalism, particularly because the Church hierarchy itself constituted an important segment of feudalism and provided its intellectual, that is theological, justification.

### *'Estrangement' and 'Alienation'*

Salvation is interpreted by some theologians as the act of overcoming estrangement between God and man. It is sometimes related to the 'fall of man' and the 'original sin'. Marxism negates all such theological propositions. As Marx wrote, "Theology explains 'the origin of evil by the fall of man: that is, it assumes as a fact, in historical form, what has to be explained'".<sup>20</sup> Marxism, on the contrary, proceeds from concrete realities. It does not analyse any phenomenon on the basis of 'assumed' facts.

Religious estrangement, that is the assumed estrangement between God and man, "occurs only in the realm of *consciousness*, of man's inner life . . .".<sup>21</sup> But, as Marx pointed out, "economic estrangement is that of *real life*; its transcendence therefore embraces both aspects".<sup>22</sup>

One of the key concepts in Marxism which has relevance to an understanding of the Marxist interpretation of salvation is 'alienation'. The central theme of this concept is man's predicament in experiencing the world and oneself passively, as the subject separated from the object. Man, instead of experiencing himself as the acting agent in relation to other human beings and in relation to nature, finds that he is estranged from all of them. The world, including himself and others, appears alien to him. Even the objects of his own creation appear alienated from him, as something standing above and against him. Marx wrote: "It is true that labour produces for the rich wonderful things—but for the workers it produces privation. It produces palaces—but for the workers, hovels. It produces beauty—but for the workers, deformity."<sup>23</sup> Again, "The worker becomes all the poorer the more he produces, the more his production increases in power and range. The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates. With the *increasing value* of the world of things proceeds in direct proportion the devaluation of the world of men."<sup>24</sup>

Thus, one dimension of the problem of alienation is that "the object which labour produces—labour's product confronts it as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer."<sup>36</sup> In other words, it is the alienation in respect of the worker's relationship to the products of his labour.

The second dimension of the problem is the alienation in the act of production itself. Labour is external to the worker. The worker's activity belongs to another! It is not his spontaneous activity. It does not belong to his essential being. It is the loss of his self. "...in his work therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself."<sup>36</sup>

A third dimension or aspect of estranged labour is the alienation of man from his *species being*. Marx pointed out: "It is just that working-up of the objective world, therefore, that man first really proves himself to be a *species being*. This production is his active species life . . . In tearing away from man the object of his production, estranged labour tears from him his species being."<sup>37</sup>

The *alien* being is not nature, not God, but man himself. In a capitalist society the root cause of alienation is the power of the exploiting class on labour and the products of labour. Private property in the means of production creates the conditions for the alienation of the workers. Labour and the products of labour belong not to workers, but to *men* who own the means of production. "If the worker's activity is a torment to him, to another it must be *delight* and his life's joy. Not the gods, not nature, but only man himself can be this alien power over man."<sup>38</sup>

Marx made a distinction between the sense of 'possessing' or 'having' and the sense of 'being'. Private property has made us "so stupid and one-sided" that we consider an object as *ours* only when we 'possess' it or when it is 'used' by us.<sup>39</sup> The value system based on private property has blunted our human senses to such an extent that we 'have' an object only when it is owned in the form of capital or other tangible form, only when it is directly possessed. The concept of 'having' has even penetrated human relations. The caricature of human relations in a capitalist society, between parents and children, between husband and wife, and so on, are permeated by chauvinistic 'possessive love' characteristic of the possessive instincts of private property.

The positive transcendence of *private property* is, therefore, the key to "the positive transcendence of all estrangement" and therefore is "the real *appropriation of the human* essence by and for man". Communism is "the complete return of man to himself as a *social* (i. e. human) being—a return become conscious, and accomplished within the entire wealth of previous development".<sup>40</sup>

Communism is "... the *genuine* resolution of the conflict between

man and nature and between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species"<sup>41</sup>

Marxism attaches crucial significance to the liberation of workers from servitude, from the bondages of private property, not because Marxists are concerned only with their liberation. In fact, Marxism assigns a leading role to workers for the emancipation of the entire society. In the words of Marx,

... the emancipation of society from private property, etc., from servitude, is expressed in the *political* form of the *emancipation of the workers*, not that *their* emancipation alone was at stake but because the emancipation of the workers contains universal human emancipation—and it contains this, because the whole of human servitude is involved in the relation of the workers to production, and every relation of servitude is but a modification and consequence of this relation.<sup>42</sup>

### *Messianic Tradition*

It is maintained by some scholars that the Marxian concepts of socialism and communism embody, in broad outline, the messianic tradition. It is true that Marx was deeply aware of the prophetic messianic tradition through the thought of philosophers of enlightenment, and especially through the thoughts of Spinoza, Goethe and Hegel. But, Marxism has nothing in common with prophecy. The parallel between Marxism and messianic tradition, in terms of judgement of the existing society, hope and vision of a new world, the conviction in the viability of the alternative, and the ardent desire and motivation on the part of those who accept the new vision, are indeed interesting. But, it will be a folly to draw any further conclusions regarding alleged similarities between Marxism and Christianity on the basis of such general resemblance. The significant point of departure between Marxism and Christianity (and the prophetic messianic tradition) is the content of the two world views.

Marxism is often described as a philosophical system based on 'praxis'. The concept of praxis, in turn, is defined in relation to a new social order which liberates man from all the fetters of the past and helps in the evolution of a new man and a new social consciousness. This liberation is not limited to socio-economic or political order of things, but encompasses the cultural, the ethical being of man. The description of Marxism as a philosophy of praxis is an affirmation of the fact that "its content is shot through with vitality and involvement" or is "bound up with the concept of action".

### *Dynamics of Historical Change*

Two ideas are basic to Marxian understanding of the dynamics of historical change. First, change is due to the contradictions between the productive forces and the relations of production. Second, the development of man and society throughout history is characterized by man's struggle with nature and against oppressive social structures. Marxism

affirms that it is not consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.

The term 'dialectical and historical materialism' is often wrongly used by opponents of Marxism to mean "material interest or motivation for more and more material gain and personal comforts". The term 'materialism' as opposed to 'idealism', is to be understood not in terms of psychic motivations but in terms of the philosophic view of the primacy of matter in motion. Materialism refers to a philosophical world view which negates 'idealistic' and 'utopian' views about the universe and the process of change or motion.

The 'materialistic' interpretation of Marx has very little in common with the idea that materialistic or economic motive is the main driving force for human beings. In fact, Marx openly disagreed with such vulgar and mechanistic interpretations of 'materialism'. He differentiated between two types of human drives: constant or 'fixed' drives, for example, hunger, sex etc., "which exist under all circumstances and which can be changed by social conditions only as far as form and direction are concerned"; and 'relative' drives which "owe their origin only to a certain type of social organization". The pursuit of maximum economic gain has never been referred to by Marx as a 'fixed' drive. On the contrary, his writings clearly indicate that he considered it as an aspect of human nature which has been the product of acquisitive class societies, particularly the capitalist society.

The criticism that Marx gave man a passive role in historical process is unfair and uninformed. In fact, Marx emphasized the active, creative role of man in history. "While external conditions do make man, man also makes his external conditions". The important point, however, is to understand the dialectical relations or the dynamic inter-connections between man and society, between man and his environment.

The relation between man and society was ably described by Marx thus: "... the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations"<sup>48</sup> Man develops as a social being. Social life is the basis on which the individual man develops his consciousness as a social being. Even religious sentiment is a social product—the product of a false consciousness.

Man, as a social being, makes his own history. He is his own creator. Man gives birth to himself in the process of social interaction, in the process of history. "The essential factor in this process of self-creation of the human race lies in its relationship with nature. Man, at the beginning of his history, is blindly bound or chained to nature. In the process of evolution he transforms his relationship to nature, and hence himself". Thus, it is futile to look for 'salvation' beyond the confines of man, society and nature. 'Salvation' or liberation is man's own enterprise; he is capable of liberating himself through his struggle against nature and through the revolutionary practice of changing oppressive

socio-economic and political structures.

### *Lessons from Indian Church History*

During the early part of the Christian era when Christianity was first introduced in India, feudal chieftains were at the pinnacles of political power. One of the main sources of revenue of the feudal chieftains in Malabar was trade in agricultural products, particularly spices. The statement of Vasco da Gama that "we seek Christians and spices" signifies the importance of the nexus between Christians and commercial capital. It was natural for the local chieftains, whose finances came from trade, to welcome the foreign traders and to grant substantial concessions to them.

The history of the Christian Church in India reveals that the early Christians in the Malabar coast were either immigrants who came to India to avoid persecution in their mother countries or those converted from among high-caste Hindus. Two major immigrations are recorded, one of Thomas of Cana and the other of Marwan Sabrison. The Christian traders were given a series of concessions by the local rulers. The original high-caste status of the Christians in Kerala apart, the major factor which enabled them to attain ascendancy in the economic and political life of the country was the fact that they represented the most advanced productive forces at that time in Indian history.

The history of Christian missionary expansion in India cannot be separated from the history of foreign colonial penetration, that of the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the British.

The unholy alliance between Christian enterprise and the colonial power was a fact, and there is no use in trying to explain this away or trying to ignore it or to minimize the part played by colonialism in the history of the Church in India. Not only did the colonial system provide political and cultural framework for Christian missions but the missionaries also provided Western colonialism with a religious justification.<sup>44</sup>

By providing the political-cultural framework for Christian missions, the foreign imperialist powers expected that the Indian Christians would provide the local support for colonial rule.

During the second phase of conversion or christianization in India, starting from the Portuguese attempts, there was a definite shift of emphasis away from high-caste Hindus to 'depressed classes' such as the Oraons, the Nagas and the Paravas. A majority of Christian migrants who were brought to Bangalore from North and South Arcot and Chittoor districts were from the depressed classes. Large numbers of people were drawn into the Christian fold by the Carnatic missions of the French Jesuits.<sup>45</sup> When the French came to political power the descendants of the Christian converts of the Carnatic Mission were inducted into the armies of the French.<sup>46</sup> The British followed suit. It is reported that most of the Indian troops stationed in Bangalore after capture by the British in

1872 were Tamil Catholics.<sup>47</sup>

The British regime took special interest in promoting Christian missionary activities in India. Colonel Munroe, who was the British Resident in Travancore from 1810 to 1819 persuaded the Rani to give the Puthan Kur Syrian (non-Roman) community land needed for a theological college at Kottayam and also an endowment which came to be known as 'Vattippanam'. Colonel Munroe took a keen interest in the affairs of the Syrian Church. He recognized the political value of promoting a high-caste-biased, powerful body of Christians in Travancore. He justified the grant of special civil rights to Christians. Supporting their case, Colonel Munroe wrote:

In the course of time still greater advantages would arise, the support of a respectable body of Christian subjects would contribute to strengthen the British power in those junctures of commotions and difficulty that have been in a state of revolution for ages. The introduction of Christianity in some of the provinces may be attended with delays; but in Travancore and Cochin, there is already a numerous body of Christian inhabitants who with moderate assistance and encouragement from the British Government will firmly attach themselves to its interest and may prove of material service in supporting its powers.<sup>48</sup>

Like Colonel Munroe in Travancore, Warren Hastings, Governor of the British East India Company, exerted pressure on the feudal prince, Maharaja Nabo Krishna Dey, to give land for building a church. "Warren Hastings took a keen personal interest in the matter, and through his influence the Maharaja was willing to part with a ground measuring 'six bighas' close to the old burial ground known as the Old Powder Magazine Yard".<sup>49</sup> In return for their support to the colonial designs, the Calcutta chaplains were also given undue concessions. "At the earlier period during Clives' administration some chaplains had been allowed a share in salt, betelnut and tobacco monopoly."<sup>50</sup> A Calcutta chaplain "in the first year received his share of the dividend of £ 2824 sterling and at the close of the second, £ 2221."<sup>51</sup>

The history of the Christian Church is thus replete with examples of the unholy alliance with imperialism and oppressive social and political structures.

During the period of the rise of Indian nationalism many theologians made attempts to interpret the Western impact and the national awakening in India in the light of the Christian faith. Some of them propounded the theory of providential character of the British rule in India.<sup>52</sup> British connections were interpreted as ordained by God in his dispensation of providence for the good of India. Some of them went so far as to suggest that Indian nationalism was against the providential design of God who established British Raj in India.<sup>53</sup> A very small number of Christian missionaries like G F Andrews, on the other hand,

held that Indian nationalism was the by-product of the British Raj and that nationalism—in the first decade of the twentieth century—was also within the providential design.

The Church hierarchies, in general, were supporters and apologists of colonial administration. However, thousands of Christians rejected the anti-national postures and opportunism of their leadership and joined the national movement out of the highest sense of patriotism. Christian workers, peasants, students and youth, middle-class, intellectuals and professional people despite the covert and overt opposition from the Church dignitaries participated fully in India's struggle for freedom.

It is an irony of history that the very same bishops and church leaders who were the props and pillars of the British regime upto August 1947, suddenly became keen supporters of the bourgeois-landlord regime of the Indian National Congress.

It is true that the Christian missionaries played a significant role in setting up educational institutions and hospitals in India. While criticising the negative features of such institutions arising mostly from their Western cultural orientation, we should not lose sight of their positive role in the spread of education and medical facilities in many parts of the country. In the early stages of Christian missionary expansion, these institutions propagated a value system based on the requirements of the then most advanced social formation, namely, that of the rising bourgeoisie, in contradiction to the superstitious, casteist, obscurantist values of the decadent feudal society. To that extent, they performed a historically progressive role.

The role of many Christian institutions in the later period of the general crisis of capitalism, has been, by and large, reactionary. They have, in general, functioned as 'ivory towers' and 'sacred preserves' for all kinds of anti-socialist or anti-working-class ideologies. This is not to deny the attempts made by certain Christian groups in recent years to re-examine their approach to education for social justice and to restructure the Christian schools and colleges in such a way as to play the role of a progressive and liberating force.

### *Status Quo Church*

The characterization of religion as the "opium of the people"—which Marx made in his day—is still broadly valid. This observation by Marx can be rewritten by the Christians only, by their own practice as authentic participants in the revolution in the days to come.

Despite the increasing awareness of many Christian groups in the problems of this world, we are faced today with an essentially 'status quo' Church. It is true that the old 'anti-communist phobia' of the established Church is slowly disappearing. Gone are the days of Pope Leo XIII who characterized Communism as a "fatal malignancy which destroys the brain of human society", and of Pope Pius XI who said that "the basis of Communism itself is fallacious, and therefore, everybody who wants to

preserve Christian civilization, must never, under any conditions whatsoever, collaborate with it". Compared to these archaic statements and the decree of July 1, 1959, confirmed and expanded in April 1959 threatening "excommunication for those who in any way cooperate with the communists or *just read their publications*" (emphasis added), the statements of Pope John XXIII were undoubtedly a substantial stride forward. Pope John acknowledged the existence of certain just aims inherent in Communism and in view of the positive activity of Communists he did not exclude the possibility of political dialogue with them. Yet, the overall character of the Church, as an organized body of men, remains essentially that of 'status quo'. The Church is linked heavily with the exploiting classes which have the hegemony of not only state power, but also of the established Church.<sup>54</sup>

Despite the serious criticisms made by Marxism on religion and 'churchified' Christianity, it must be made clear that Marxists disagree with the suggestions of some bourgeois atheists and anarchists that coercive force must be used against religion.<sup>55</sup> In fact, Marx and Engels, in their own times, fought against such propositions. They denounced, in very forceful and resolute terms, the ultra enthusiasm shown by anarchists, Blanquists, and others (like Duhring) in this direction.<sup>56</sup> Marx and Engels showed that religion cannot be fought either by abstract propaganda or by physical persecution. They demonstrated, in the true spirit of historical materialism, that religion can be eliminated only by eliminating the socio-economic and political conditions which give rise to theological and metaphysical ideas among the people. Working people will be able to free themselves from religious superstitions and metaphysical conceptions only through their participation in the socio-economic and political revolution. Such concrete revolutionary action should no doubt be supported by the propagation of the dialectical materialist world outlook of Scientific Socialism.

### *Crisis in Religion*

The revolutionary upsurge in various parts of the world including the citadels of world capitalism, has created a crisis in religion. The root of this crisis is the contradiction between the established Church—one of the superstructures of the exploitative capitalist system—and the rising working-class power moulded in revolutionary work.<sup>57</sup> The scientific and technological advances during the twentieth century have eroded many religious myths. The preservers of traditional theology have virtually no solution to the problem of continuous 'devaluation of religion'<sup>58</sup> and the depletion from the ranks of the Church of large numbers of people of all classes who apply their powers of free-thinking and rational judgement.

Equally important are the attempts by Christians who are reappraising their inherited theological positions, to work out a 'secular theology'<sup>59</sup> or even a 'theology of revolution'. The realization that non-

political and emotional Christian faith is irrelevant in the present-day society is dawning on many Christian theologians.

Most of the writings of these New Theologians have helped in giving a superficially 'modern look' to Christianity. In fact, they have aimed at making Christianity more acceptable to man in the modern scientific age. Most of the New Theology, it must be added, is essentially reformist stuff. At the same time, the positive contribution by the new ferment in theology cannot be underestimated. One of the profound positive effects of the whole project is that the hierarchies of the Church and the clergy are forced to enter into a "dialogue with the world and with Marxists in particular".<sup>80</sup>

Against the backdrop of the revolutionary movement of the working people, it is natural that individuals and groups within the Christian Church are drawn into revolutionary action. Many Christians have felt the compelling need of being with the revolution. Church hierarchies, on the other hand, are finding it increasingly difficult to convince the believers that the existing socio-economic and political order was ordained by God and, therefore, any attempt to tamper with it is a sin against God.<sup>81</sup>

### *From Dialogue to Action*

Having made an honest reiteration of philosophical positions, I must hasten to assert the great potential and indeed the utter necessity, of Marxist-Christian dialogue *and joint action* on a large number of issues relating to man and society. And I strongly feel that the basis of dialogue and joint action has to be an honest endeavour to work out areas of common concern and action in concrete living situations.

Christians and Marxists started working together for the first time probably during the Second World War. In concentration camps and in the resistance movements against Nazi power they had common suffering, mutual understanding and common action. Many events have taken place since then: the World Council of Churches' Conference on Church and Society (Geneva), the 1968 Uppsala Assembly, the Second Vatican Council, the Conference of 200 Marxists and Christian philosophers organized by the Sociological Institute of the Czechoslovakian Academy of Sciences in April 1967 are a few of these.

Christian-Marxist dialogue has not penetrated into all the important segments of the Christian Church and the Marxist groups. The hesitation to enter into a meaningful dialogue between Christians and Marxists can be partly explained by the mutual suspicion that dialogue would imply the weakening or giving up of conflicting philosophical or ideological positions. The initial hesitation is slowly being abandoned and the old prejudices and anti-Communist phobia increasingly forgotten. What is important now is the firm realization that mutual isolation will only postpone revolution and hence Marxists and Christians who are genuinely interested in revolutionary work must cooperate for mutual

understanding and joint revolutionary actions.

I think a time has come when we should move on from Christian-Marxist dialogue to joint action in revolutionary work. The Marxist-Leninist position on this question is quite clear. Marxists are prepared for such a joint action because, as Lenin stated "... unity of this really revolutionary struggle of the oppressed class for the creation of a paradise on earth is more important for us than the unity of opinions of the proletarians concerning paradise in heaven."<sup>62</sup>

Marxist-Leninists desire the maximum unity of the wide masses of the workers, peasants, small and medium producers, middle-class, intelligentsia, and so on, against the oppressing and exploiting classes, the capitalists and feudal landlords, against imperialism, against all obscurantist and conservative ideas which obstruct social, economic, political and cultural advance of the people, for the success of people's democratic advance and for socialism.

If Christians want to be revolutionaries, two things are imperative: (i) knowledge of the world, the historical processes, knowledge of society and social relationships and their laws as historical materialism discovered them, and (ii) social and political action to translate this knowledge into practice which enriches and furthers the knowledge. Only when revolutionary action has been performed, only when Christians enter into the political arena for the seizure of state power on behalf of the working class and its allies, can Christians legitimately call themselves revolutionaries.

### *Need for Revolution within the Church*

A prerequisite for effective Christian participation in revolution is the ability of enlightened Christian groups to initiate a 'revolution' within the Church. This means that there must be an enlightened group which believes in, and is prepared to act for, the plausibility of a change within the Church itself. Shouldn't we eliminate hierarchical structures within the Church? Shouldn't we limit the luxury of sanctuaries? Shouldn't we relinquish traditional pomposity of ceremonies and rich embellishments of the vestments? All these are relevant questions. But the question on which the Christians' sincerity for the revolutionary cause will be judged is the practice of revolution.<sup>63</sup> In other words, the Church, to be part of revolution, must stand unhesitatingly and solidly with the working class and its allies against the bourgeois-landlord power and against imperialism and take the revolutionary movement to its destiny.

In this connection, it is important to note the concern of many Christians who are seeking an answer to the problems of social justice in India. The study seminar on "Education for Social Change," organized by the Xavier Board of Higher Education in India in 1972 came to the following conclusion:

Without a far-reaching and radical change in the present socio-economic and political structure in which decision-making is concentrated in the hands of the small groups, it will not be possible for the

majority of the Indian people to have even the minimum standard of living, not to speak of enjoying opportunities for material and cultural advancement.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, the root cause of social injustice is traced to the "socio-economic and political structure" in India. Social justice is possible only through a far-reaching and radical change in these power structures.

The study seminar did not leave the concept of 'radical change' undefined. According to the statement approved by the seminar,

radical social change involves:

- i) participation of the people in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes towards the establishment of an egalitarian society, providing opportunities for the fullest possible development of their material and cultural life;
- ii) complete elimination of the power structure in Indian society, the elimination of monopoly capitalism, feudalism and control of foreign finance capital and know-how;
- iii) avoidance of the domination by the authoritarian elite on the system of education and the socio-political system in general;
- iv) an adequate system of production and distribution to ensure a minimum level of living for the people...<sup>65</sup>

Salvation or liberation in the Indian context involves the struggle of all oppressed people against the three enemies identified above. It involves the building up of the widest unity of all those who are in contradiction with these three obstacles to social change and progress. It involves the united struggles of the industrial working class, agricultural labour, peasants, particularly small and medium peasants, petty-bourgeoisie or small scale producers, middle class, intellectuals, professional people, students, youth and women—in short, all those who are prepared to struggle against the exploitative and oppressive state power in India and replace it with a new State of People's Democracy leading to Socialism.

<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Anti-Duhring*: See Marx and Engels, *On Religion*, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1972, p 133.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p 184.

<sup>3</sup> Marx and Engels, *On Religion*, Foreword to Russian edition, p 9.

<sup>4</sup> Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*; See Marx and Engels, *On Religion*, p 38.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p 37.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p 38.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> See Engels, *Bruno Bauer and Early Christianity*, *The Book of Revelation* and *On the History of Early Christianity*.

<sup>10</sup> Marx and Engels, *On Religion*, Foreword to the Russian edition, p 9.

<sup>11</sup> Engels, *The Peasant War In Germany*; See Marx and Engels, *On Religion* pp 87-88.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p 88.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph L Hromadka, "Gospel for Atheists", *RISK*, Youth Department, WCC, Geneva 1965, p 25.

- 14 Paul Oestreicher, *The Christian-Marxist Dialogue*, Macmillan, London 1969, p 39.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 Marx and Engels, *The Holy Family or Critique of Critical Criticism*.
- 17 For a detailed exposition, see Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, Introduction to the English edition.
- 18 Marx, *Capital*; Engels, *Anti-Duhring*; also *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*.
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- 21 Charles M. Savage, "Critiques Reconsidered", *Study Encounter*, Division of Studies, WCC, Geneva, 1968, Vol IV, No 1, p 3.
- 22 Christopher Dawson, *The Revolt in Asia*, Sheed and Ward, London, p 7.
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- 31 *Ibid.*, p 96.
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- 33 *Ibid.*, p 68.
- 34 *Ibid.*
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- 44 T V Philip, "Search for Church Unity in Kerala: Some Historical-Cultural Observations", *Religion and Society*, Vol XVII, No 4, C I S R S, Bangalore 1970.
- 45 Muthiah David Appavoo, *The Effects of Migration on the Churches of Bangalore*, Bangalore 1965, p 15.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p 6.
- 47 *Ibid.*
- 48 Quoted in T V Philip. *op. cit.*
- 49 Eyre Chatterton, *A History of the Church of England in India since the Early Days of the East India Company*, London 1924, p 2.
- 50 *Ibid.*, p 88.
- 51 *Ibid.*
- 52 M M Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of Indian Renaissance*, Madras 1970, p 248.
- 53 *Ibid.*, p 249.
- 54 K Mathew Kurian, "Religion, Development and Revolutionary Ideologies", Paper presented to the Seminar on Religion and Development, Kandy, Sri Lanka, December 9-16, 1973.
- 55 This does not mean that the bourgeoisie is in fact using force against religion; they often use religion in their favour.

- <sup>58</sup> Engels, *Anti-Duhring*; also *Emigrant Literature*.
- <sup>57</sup> Terry Eagleton refers to the "deep-seated contradiction in attitude", in the relationships between the Christian Church and the working class in Britain; See Terry Eagleton's contribution in *Catholics and the Left, The 'Slant' Manifesto*, Templegate Publishers, Springfield, Illinois, 1966, p 58.
- <sup>58</sup> A phrase used by M Mchedlov, "Religious 'Reformation' under the Impact of Life". *Study Encounter*, Vol IV, No 1, 1968, p 20.
- <sup>59</sup> See Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: also God's Revolution and Man's Responsibility*, SCM Press.
- <sup>60</sup> The following sections of this paper are based on an earlier work of the author. See K Mathew Kurian, "Religion, Development and Revolutionary Ideologies", Paper presented to the Seminar on Religion and Development, Kandy, Sri Lanka, December 9-16, 1973.
- <sup>61</sup> A similar line was taken by the German Church. See Charles M Savage, *op. cit.*, p 3.
- <sup>62</sup> Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 10, pp 68-69.
- <sup>63</sup> The same point was made by Jurgen Moltmann in his article on "The Theology of Revolution", *New Christian*, December 12, 1965, p 9.
- <sup>64</sup> The Xavier Board of Higher Education in India, *Education for Social Change*, Report of a study seminar, at the Indian Social Institute Training Centre, Bangalore, April 29-May 1, 1972. See "Statement of the Seminar", p 26.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p 26.

JASBIR SINGH AHLUWALIA

## *Anti-Feudal Dialectic of Sikhism*

SIKHISM arose essentially as a non-Vedantic mode of thought in the historical fight against the feudal value-pattern. This brings into sharp focus the characteristic anti-feudal dialectic of Sikhism which subsequently got blunted in the correlative processes of feudalization and vedanticization of the Sikh tradition. Guru Nanak evolved a harmonious conceptual framework within which he reconciled a spiritualist conception of the transcendental being with a materialist view of the phenomenal reality on the basis of a new causal relation that is different from *vivartavada* of Advaita Vedanta, *satkaryavada* of Visistadvaita Vedanta and *parinamavada* of the Sankhya system. Also, the concept of creation as a causal relation has nothing in common with the Buddhist idea of dependent origination. The spiritualist-materialist tradition of thought as advanced by Guru Nanak correlated the *saguna* reality with the *nirguna* Being in a unique way that ensured the indeterminateness of the transcendental Being in its aseity as well as its determinate relatedness with the empirical reality, which as such could not be dismissed outright as sensory illusion or *maya adhyasa*. This also shows how the Sikh philosophy transcends the traditional polarity of being and becoming with Advaita Vedanta at one extreme and the original Buddhism at the other. Transcendental determinism gives way to phenomenal causality in the Sikh thought. Unfortunately under the

impact of the two-fold process of feudalization and vedanticization, the spiritualist-materialist tradition of thought of the Nanak variety has gravitated back towards the old spiritualist-idealist tradition to such an extent that its shadow has eclipsed the very identity of Sikhism.

To rediscover the metaphysical distinctiveness of the Sikh philosophy, we have to keep in view the socio-economic context of its origin.

Contemporary sociologists advance the view that in medieval India, certain post-feudal bourgeois relations were visibly developing in the womb of the feudal society;<sup>1</sup> corresponding to this embryonic growth, new revolutionary forces, both at the social and the ideological level, were emerging slowly but steadily. Sikhism arose as a dynamic expression of this process destined to play a historical role in the transition to the post-feudal frame of values and modes of thought. The Bhakti traditions (*nirguna* and *saguna*) of the medieval period remained far behind the Sikh movement socially and ideationally in opposing the given thought-systems and social organization. The ideational base and the motivational urges of Sikhism were qualitatively different from those characterizing the other medieval Bhakti movements with which the Sikh mysticism is often confused by those who, with a reductive methodology, are interested more in working out the so-called unity-in-diversity than in analysing out its distinctive contributions to Indian thought in general. As pointed out by Hazari Prasad Dwivedi<sup>2</sup> the *saguna* Bhakti tradition was not dissatisfied with the social conditions of the medieval age; it betrayed compromising tendencies. On the other hand, the *nirguna dhara* could go only to the extent of expressing social protest at the surface level. What was needed was to inject a revolutionary spirit in this social protest and to give it an anti-feudalistic orientation socially as well as ideologically. This is how Guru Nanak filled the protestant spirit of the age with new ideational content enabling it to develop into a revolutionary force with far-reaching historical consequences. The conservative in-worldliness as well as the other-worldliness of the Bhakti mysticism turned into a this-worldly dynamism directed against the *status quo* in the realms of thought and ethics. Herein lies the uniqueness of the Sikh movement which gets distorted when Sikhism is interpreted either as a reformed phase of Hinduism or as a synthesis of the Hindu and the Islamic thought. Those characteristics of Sikhism which give the impression of its being a Hindu reformation or a form of medieval synthesis are, in a sense, only the epiphenomenal attributes referring not to its inner dialectic but only to its exogenous growth.

### *Polity and Religion*

Social equality of all human beings irrespective of caste, creed, country, sex or station in life; elevation of labour; non-acceptance of the fatalistic-deterministic form of Karmic law—these concepts flow from the anti-feudal matrix of Sikhism. By bestowing the spiritual sovereignty on the *Adi Granth* and the temporal sovereignty on *Panj Piaras*, representing the *Khalsa Panth*, Guru Gobind Singh has carved out the democratic-

republican character of the Sikh polity. For the first time, after Buddhism, Sikhism conceived of religion as a State (Church) in its own right, but without any coalescence of the spiritual and the temporal sovereignty, as in Islam (*the Caliphate*). God has been predicated as *Sacha Patshah*. The conception of religion as a State was one of the ways in which Sikhism fought against the might of the feudal polity. It is also significant to note that in the Sikh polity, the priestly class is not given the same role or position that it had in the feudalized Brahminical polity. In other words, there is an interrelationship between the Sikh polity and the Sikh religion but an intermixture or coalescence which is characteristic of the feudalistic polity is absent. The coalescence of the spiritual and the temporal sovereignty, realized in the person of Guru Gobind Singh, ended when the Guru bestowed the one on the *Adi Granth* and the other on the *Khalsa Panth*; the two realms, though interconnected, were thus made relatively autonomous and distinct from each other. The Sikh polity does not envisage a theocratic state in the sense of coalescence of the spiritual and the temporal authority and domination of the priestly class in the institutions and processes of the temporal state.

To provide an anti-feudal ideational basis to the Sikh movement, Guru Nanak introduced some new concepts into the system of Indian philosophy.

#### *Spiritualist-Materialist Philosophy*

Guru Nanak, discarding the spiritualist-idealist (*Vedantic*) tradition, evolved his own distinctive approach which may be termed as the spiritualist-materialist mode of thought; a spiritualist conception of the Absolute Being was coordinated with a materialist conception of the phenomenal reality through the notion of creation as a new kind of causal relationship. It may be remembered here that along with the spiritualist-idealist (*Vedantic*) tradition, a current of materialism is also noticeable in the history of Indian philosophy; its *astic* form has also remained predominant. To understand the distinctive ontological character of the Sikh philosophy we have to keep in view this materialist tradition also. The pre-Nanak Indian materialism could not evolve a conception of reality with change as its inner characteristic, law or principle. Either the very reality of change was denied or the efficient cause of change was seen existing externally, that is, transcendently. Either way, Indian materialism had a weakness that from one side or the other pushed it towards Vedantic idealism.

The pre-Nanak materialism viewed matter as eternal and possessing an in-itself reality; but being devoid of intrinsic dynamism, it remained dependent upon an external, transcendental source for the initiation or innervation of the process of becoming. Guru Nanak gave a new orientation and complexion to the materialist tradition: instead of holding matter as eternal (monistically) or coeternal with non-material reality (dualistically), he envisaged the phenomenal, material reality as a creation of the transcendental spiritual reality (*Ik Onkar*). According to Guru Nanak's

*Japji* this creation was instantaneously brought into being *once for all* by the Divine Command. The created nature, matter or material reality was made self-moving by God who imparted motion to it *once for all*. Guru Nanak says in his *Japji* that matter (*māya*) got pregnant in some mysterious way and delivered Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, symbolizing the causal laws or principles of *becoming*, *enduring* and *disintegrating*. In other words, matter is governed by these three causal laws or principles. Puran Singh in his English translation of *Japji* rightly interprets them as the "three dynamic principles that keep creation going."

The Divine *hukam* takes the form of causality that operates both at the material and the ethical levels. Its ethical form is a new conception of Karmic law as a synthesis of freedom and necessity. This causality was imparted to the created reality once for all, as contended by Guru Nanak in his *Japji*. Instead of the passive *purusa* of the Sankhya system, there is in the *Gurubani* the concept of *Karta-Purkh* (the Creator); in place of *prakṛti* (with *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*) there is the notion of nature intrinsically possessing the three principles of *becoming*, *enduring* and *disintegrating*.

### Concept of Creation

The idea of creation occurs frequently in philosophy as well as mythological literature. But Guru Nanak's conception is philosophically unique in that as a causal category it harmonizes a spiritualist concept of the Absolute with a materialist notion of the phenomenal reality. The concept of creation is the basic generic idea of Sikhism. The different interpretations and schools of Buddhism flowed from its own basic generic idea of substancelessness of reality. But the divergent interpretations of Sikhism do not proceed from the focal idea of creation. Often the interpretations placed on the concept of creation negate its original conceptual signification. The idea of creation in the Sikh philosophy projects a new causal relation between the Absolute and the phenomenal reality, which is different from the types of relation envisaged in the concepts of appearance, reflection, manifestation, emanation, imitation, configuration, transformation and so forth.

The conception of creation in Sikhism is often confused with that in the Bible. In Christianity, "God did not only create the world, he also keeps it in being";<sup>8</sup> the continual activity of God is essential to keep the world going in the same way in which continual passage of electric current is required to keep the bulb illuminated. On the other hand, according to the Sikh thought, God has made the world self-active by bestowing upon it *once for all* the three causal principles of *becoming*, *enduring* and *disintegrating*. The significance of the point lies in the fact that in this way the Sikh concept of creation acquires a spiritualist-materialist character.

The Sikh concept of creation is also distinct from the pre-Nanak ideas in Indian philosophy and mythology. The notions of creation based on *parinamavada* (*Brahman-parinamavada*, *Prakṛti-parinamavada*) make the Creator as the material cause also of the reality. Here the concept of the

immanence of the cause in the effect is just another way of saying that the latter pre-exists in the former. The kind of immanence envisaged here may take different forms, keeping intact the idea of transcendence. The *saguna* reality may be seen as a manifest form of transformation of the *nirguna*; the *saguna* could be considered as an attribute, predicate or part of the *nirguna*. The immanence, here, can be interpreted also in the sense that the *nirguna* is completely absorbed in the *saguna* without any transcendence of the former, as asserted by Pantheism. On the other hand, in the Sikh philosophy the immanence-transcendence problem is approached in a different way. The creation-based causality being different from *parinama-vada*, there is no question of holding the (*saguna*) effect as being pre-existent in the (*nirguna*) cause. Accordingly, God here cannot be predicated as the material cause of the (created) world; he is its efficient (*Karta*) cause. God is immanent in the phenomenal reality of the world in the same way in which an artist can be said to be present in his art. God is also immanent in the sense that it is his *hukam* that in the form of causality is immanent in nature.

The concept of creation keeps intact the *in-itself indeterminate character* of the Absolute (*Ik Onkar*) before the creative act, while at the same time it refers to the *determinate aspect* of God who after the creative act comes to have a determinate relation with his creation. This ensures the reality of *namrupa* categories of experience for predication of the relationship between the creator and the creation. The Sikh concept of the *nirguna-saguna* relationship is in tune with the modern trends in the philosophy of religion.<sup>4</sup> The reality of the *namrupa* categories provides a logical basis to the predication of the relationship between *jiva* and *paramatman* in terms of the concrete, experiential human relationships. This, in a sense, injects the human content in the Divine love. Accordingly Sikh mysticism comes to have a humanistic complexion and orientation.

In place of the Vedantic *tat twam asi* Sikh mysticism accepts the separate, existential *being* of the individual as *jiva*. Further, the concept of union with the Absolute, here means a direct passionate communion with God—a communion that involves not self-annihilation or self-merger, but self-realization.

Guru Nanak's *Japji* stresses that the way to *sachkhand* passes through *dharamkhand*, *giankhand*, *saramkhand* and *karmkhand*; these are the stages in the ethical evolution of man, elevating him to the final stage of communion with God. From this angle Sikh mysticism may be appropriately termed as a form of ethical mysticism wherein due significance has been given to the existential being of the individual as well as his normal freedom and responsibility. These characteristics of Sikh mysticism flow from the underlying anti-feudal, non-Vedantic ontology.

<sup>1</sup> AI Chicherov, *India: Economic Development in the 16th—18th Century*, Moscow 1971, p 236.

<sup>2</sup> *Punjabi Duniya* (September-October 1965), Punjab Languages Department, Patiala, p 168.

<sup>3</sup> *Christianity*, Punjabi University, Patiala 1969, p 23.

<sup>4</sup> *Religion in Philosophical and Cultural Perspective*, J C Feaver and William Horosz (eds.), Princeton 1967, p 15.

SHARAD PATIL

*Distribution of Communal Wealth in Ancient India:  
Dice and Agriculture*

IF the kula-ṭā roamed from kula to kula in order to discharge her priestly magical functions, then the accomplishments in dancing and singing and their public display by the jana-pada-kalyāṇīs and gaṇikas could not have been just 'art for art's sake.'

This tribal mother we meet as an apsaras (nymph) in the hymns IV. 38 of the non-Aryan Atharva-veda :

1 The up-shooting, all-conquering, successfully playing (sādhudevīnīm) Apsaras, that wins (kṛ) the winnings of the pool (?glaha) —that Apsaras I call on here.

2 The distributing (vi-ci) on-strewing (ā-kir) successfully playing Apsaras, that seizes (grah) the winnings of the pool—that Apsaras I call on here.

3 She who dances about with the dice (? aya), taking to herself the winning from the pool—let her, trying to gain (?) for us the winnings, obtain the stake (? prahā) by magic (māyā), let her come to us rich in milk; let them not conquer from us these riches.<sup>1</sup>

Apsaras here is defined by the commentator as a nymph who is the presiding deity of dicing (dyūta-kriyā-adhīdevatām apsaro-jātīyām). Devin means a gambler, and devinī is its feminine form. The divine gambler is shown preparing (vi-ci) the dice and shuffling (ā-kir) them in

a receptacle (glaha) and presenting it to the assembled gamblers for drawing, all the while dancing. The game of dice looks like a modern cabaret and a gangsters' den combined !

Atharva-vedic hymn VII. 109 throws more light on the real character of the gamblers and the dice :

2 Do thou, O Agni, carry ghee for the Apsarases, dust for the dice, gravel and waters; enjoying in their respective shares the oblation-giving, the gods revel in both kinds of oblations.

5 He who made these riches for our playing, who (does) the taking (?) and leaving of the dice—that god, enjoying this libation of ours—may we revel a joint revelling with the Gandharvas.

6 Having good things in common (? saṁ-vasu)—that is your appellation; for stern-looking, realm-bearing (rāṣṭrabhṛto) (are) the dice; you as such, O drops (Indavo), would we worship with oblation; may we be lords of wealth.

7 If (yāt) a supplicant I call on the gods, if we have dwelt in Vedic studentship (brahma-carya), if I take up the brown dice (babhrūn)—let them be gracious to us in such plight.<sup>2</sup>

### *Tribal Assembly*

The place of joint revelling in ancient society was the tribal assembly (sabhā). Atharva-vedic hymn VII. 12.2 invokes the assembly thus: "We know thy name, O assembly (sabhe); verily sport (nariṣṭā) by name art those; whoever are thine assembly-sitters (sabhā-sadas), let them be of like speech with me."<sup>3</sup>

Hence, the gamblers were sabhā-sadas, members of the tribal assembly. The dice were invoked as saṁ-vasu, 'having good things in common' or communal property. The seer of the latterly-quoted hymn (VII. 12) chants:

Eṣāṁ ahaṁ samāsinānāṁ varco vijñānam ā dade

Ayāḥ sarvasyaḥ saṁsado mām Indra bhagināṁ kṛṇu.

[Endow me with the same splendour and discernment as these who have assembled together. Make me, O Indra, a possessor of a share of this whole (tribal assembly.)]

What does this share consist of? The Atharva-vedic hymn IV. 33 provides the answer:

2 With desire of pleasant fields (su-kṣetriyā), of welfare, of good things (vasūyā), we sacrifice—gleaming away our evil.

That is why the dice are equated with dust, gravel and water (pāṁsūn, sikatā, apaḥ). The dice represented su-kṣetras, fertile fields. But, these fields were common property (saṁ-vasu). Hence, the bhāga or share could be nothing other than the kula share of the communal land.

The dice are called also as rāṣṭra-bearing. Rāṣṭra in Kauṭalya's Artha-śāstra meant land of the people, while Sītā meant royal land. Kosambi correctly interprets rāṣṭra as tribal land.<sup>4</sup> In other words, it

meant the communal land of a tribe. The Rāṣṭra-bhṛt mantras of Taittirīya Saṁhitā (III.4.8) were a ritual to gain a phratry or clan share in the tribal land. But the text has been invariably interpreted as a ritual to gain a kingdom or a village.<sup>8</sup>

### *Method of Drawing Lots*

But the dice described by the Atharva-veda are not the dice with which gamblers played. Pāṇini's rule II. 1.10 (Akṣa-śalākā-saṅkhyāḥ pariṇū) provides the clue. It gives śalākā as a synonym of akṣa, i. e., die. Śalākā means a grass blade. The solution of this hitherto inexplicable problem is provided by the Buddhist saṅgha:

1 At that time the Saṁgha's store-room was over-full of clothes. They told this thing to the Blessed One.

'I prescribe, O Bhikkhus, that they should be distributed by the assembled Saṁgha.'

At that time the whole Saṁgha, when distributing the clothes, made a bustle.

They told this thing to the Blessed One.

'I prescribe, O Bhikkhus, that you appoint a Bhikkhu possessed of the following five qualities, to distribute the clothes: (a person) who does not go in the evil course of lust, in the evil course of hatred, in the evil course of delusion, in the evil course of fear, and who knows what is laid by and what is not.

'And you ought, O Bhikkhus, to appoint (such a Bhikkhu) in this way: First, that Bhikkhu must be asked (to accept the commission). When he has been asked, let a learned, competent Bhikkhu proclaim the following ṇatti (proposal) before the Saṁgha: "Let the Saṁgha, reverend Sirs, hear me. If the Saṁgha is ready, let the Saṁgha appoint the Bhikkhu N N to distribute the robes (presented to the Saṁgha). This is ṇatti. Let the Saṁgha, reverend Sirs, hear me. The Saṁgha appoints the Bhikkhu N N to distribute the robes (presented). Let any one of the venerable brethren who is in favour of our appointing the Bhikkhu N N to distribute the robes (presented), be silent, and any one who is not in favour of it, speak. The Bhikkhu N N has been appointed by the Saṁgha to distribute the robes (presented). The Saṁgha is in favour of it, therefore are you silent, thus I undersrand."

2 Now the Bhikkhus appointed to distribute the clothes thought: 'In what way are we to distribute the clothes?'

They told this thing to the Blessed One.

'I prescribe, O Bhikkhus, that you first assort the clothes, estimate them, share them according to their higher or lower value, then count the Bhikkhus, divide them into troops, and divide the portions of cloth (accordingly).'

4 Now the Bhikkhus, who were to distribute the clothes, thought: 'How are we to assign the portions of cloth (to the single Bhikkhus),

or according to their age (i. e. the time elapsed since their ordination) ?'

They told this thing to the Blessed One.

'I prescribe, O Bhikkhus, that you cast lots, made of grass-blades, after having made every defective portion even.'

The word used for grass blade is kusa-pāta.<sup>8</sup> The monk in charge of lot-taking was called salākag-gahāpaka, who was selected and elected by the saṅgha in the same manner.<sup>9</sup> The salākas used for taking votes seem to have been also coloured pieces of wood.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the dice or akṣas originally were lots whose function was to apportion equally the communal property among the members of a tribe. The method of drawing lots will become clear by the procedure followed by the Buddhist saṅgha:

Now at that time there was a scarcity of food at Rājagaha. The people were unable to provide food for the whole Saṅgha; and they were desirous of providing food (to be sent to the Vihāra) for the use of a special Bhikkhu (designated by the donor), or for special Bhikkhus invited (by the donor in his own house), or for (single Bhikkhus) appointed by ticket (issued by the Saṅgha) (salāka-bhattaṁ kātum) . . .

Now at that time the Chabbaggiya Bhikkhus having received good food for themselves, gave over the worse food (which they had also received) to the other Bhikkhus.

They told this matter to the Blessed One.

'I allow you, O Bhikkhus, to appoint as apportioner of rations (bhatta-uddesaka) a Bhikkhu . . .'

Then follows the same procedure of selecting and electing a monk to the post of bhatta-uddesaka. The account goes on further.

Now the Bhikkhus who were apportioners of rations, thought: 'How then are the rations to be apportioned ?'

They told this matter to the Blessed One.

'I allow you, O Bhikkhus, to apportion them by arranging the food in small heaps, and fastening tickets or marks upon them.' (Anujānāmi, Bhikkhave, Salākāyā vā paṭṭikāyā vā upanibandhitvā opuñjtvā bhattaṁ uddisitum).<sup>12</sup>

Buddhaghoṣa's commentary further explains that a Salākā of leaf or bamboo or bark or strip of wood with the name of the donor written on it was stuck on the heap of the food sent by him for the saṅgha, and a replica of it prepared as a lot. After treating every heap of food in the same manner, the salākā replicas reserved as lots were put in a receptacle, shaken well for shuffling the lots, and then given to the assembled monks for drawing.<sup>13</sup> Here the bhatta-uddesaka himself seems to have acted as a salākag-gahāpaka.

### *Rules for Tribal Life*

These modern-looking republican practices of administering the Buddhist monastic order (saṅgha) did not originate in the head of Buddha,

as he is made to declare by the Buddhist scriptures: that it was he that taught the Vajjis the basic rules (dhammas) of regulating their tribal life. The incident is described by the Mahā-parinibbana-sutta of Dīgha-nikāya. The Magadhan king Ajātasattu wanted to crush the tribal confederation of the Vajjis, the most serious obstacle to his imperialistic designs. But he had learnt at his own cost that no amount of frontal onslaught would gain his objective. Hence, he sent his prime minister (Mahā-amatta), the Brahmin Vassa-kāra (Sanskrit Varṣā-kāra, rain-maker), to Buddha to seek his advice in that matter.

4 Now at that time the venerable Ananda was standing behind the Blessed One, and fanning him. And the Blessed One said to him: 'Have you heard, Ananda, that the Vajjians hold full and frequent public assemblies?'

'Lord, so I have heard,' replied he.

'So long, Ananda,' rejoined the Blessed One, 'as the Vajjians hold these full and frequent public assemblies; so long may they be expected not to decline, but to prosper.'

And in like manner questioning Ananda, and receiving a similar reply, the Blessed One declared, as follows, the other conditions which would ensure the welfare of the Vajjian confederacy:-

'So long, Ananda, as the Vajjians meet together in concord, and rise in concord—so long as they enact nothing not already established, abrogate nothing that has been already enacted, and act in accordance with the ancient institutions of the Vajjians (porāṇe, Vajji-dhamme) as established in former days;

so long as they honour and esteem and revere and support the Vajjian elders (mahallakā, Sanskrit mahattaras), and hold it a point of duty to hearken to their words;

so long as no women or girls belonging to their clans (kula-itthiyo, kula-kumāriyo) are detained among them by force or abduction;

so long as they honour and esteem and revere and support the Vajjian Shrines (cetiyaṇi) in town and country, and allow not the religious taxes (dhammikaṃ baliṃ),<sup>14</sup> as formerly given and performed (dinna-pubbaṃ kata-pubbaṃ), to fall in desuetude;

so long as the rightful protection, defence and support shall be fully provided for the Arahats among them, so that Arahats from a distance may enter the realm, and the Arahats therein may live at ease;

so long may the Vajjians be expected not to decline, but to prosper.'

5 Then the Blessed One addressed Vassakāra the Brāhman, and said:

'When I was once staying, O Brāhman, at Vesāli at the Sārandada Temple (cetiye), I taught the Vajjians these (seven) conditions of welfare (satta aparihāniye dhamme) . . .'<sup>15</sup>

Buddha himself declares that the Vajjis abided by their ancient institutions (porāṇe dhamme). These seven dhammas were part and parcel

of their ancient institutions. Morgan informs us that the Iroquois of North America regulated their tribal life by ten such dhammas.<sup>16</sup> The ancient Greeks and Romans were similarly guided respectively by ten and nine dhammas.<sup>17</sup> Immediately after Vessakāra had left, Buddha bade Ananda to call all the Bhikkhus present in Rāja-gaha together in the service hall of the vihāra, and when they were so assembled, he preached to them as follows:

‘I will teach you, O mendicants, seven conditions of the welfare (satta . . . aparihāniya dhamme) of a community. Listen well and attend, and I will speak.’

‘Even so, Lord’ said the brethren, in assent, to the Blessed One; and he spake as follows:

‘So long, O mendicants, as the brethren meet together in full and frequent assemblies;

so long as they meet together in concord, and rise in concord, and carry out in concord the duties of the order;

so long as the brethren shall establish nothing that has not been already prescribed, and arrogate nothing that has been already established, and act in accordance with the rules of the order as now laid down;

so long as the brethren honour and esteem and revere and support the elders of experience and long standing (therā rattaññū cirapabbajitā), the fathers and leaders of the order (saṅgha-pitarā, saṅga-pariñāyakā), and hold it a point of duty to hearken to their words;

so long as the brethren fall not under the influence of that craving (taṇhāya) which, springing up within them, would give rise to renewed existence;

so long as the brethren delight in a life of solitude;

so long as the brethren so train their minds that good and holy men [who as yet have not come where they dwell (anāgatā)] shall come to them, and those who have come shall dwell at ease;

so long may the brethren be expected, not to decline, but to prosper . . .<sup>18</sup>

### *Balloting Procedure*

But a tribe could not be expected to take all of its decisions with unanimity. Differences were bound to arise and then decisions had to be taken by majority vote. It was also for this purpose that akṣas or salākas of different colours, denoting positive or negative votes, were utilized, and the officer in charge of this balloting of a tribe in its mote hall used to be the salāka-gahāpaka.

It has already been shown that the bhatta-uddesaka himself had at times to act as the salāka-gahāpaka for apportioning the food rations by lots. The office of bhatta-uddesaka was said to have been brought into being by Dabba, a former khattiya member of the Mallas, one of the most ancient and renowned saṅgh-gaṇas of the time. Vinayapiṭaka narrates the story thus:

Now at that time the venerable Dabba the Mallian (Malla-puttena), who had realized Arahat-ship when he was seven years old, had entered into possession of every (spiritual gift) which can be acquired by a disciple . . . And when the venerable Dabba the Mallian had retired into solitude, and was sunk in thought, the following consideration presented itself to his mind: 'Arahatship had I acquired when I was seven years old. I have gained everything that a learner can reach to. There is nothing further left for me to do, nothing to gather up of the fruit of that which I have done. What service is it possible for me to render to the Saṅgha?' And it occurred to the venerable Dabba the Mallian: 'It would be a good thing for me to regulate the lodging-places for the Saṅgha and to apportion the rations of food.'

8 And when, at eventide, the venerable Dabba the Mallian had arisen from his meditations, he went to the place where the Blessed One was; and . . . he saluted the Blessed One, and took his seat on one side; and . . . spake thus to the Blessed one: 'When I had retired, Lord, into solitude . . . the following consideration presented itself to my mind . . . it would be a good thing for me to regulate the lodging-places for the Saṅgha, and to apportion the rations of food. I desire, Lord, (so to do).'

'Very good, Dabba. Do you then regulate the lodging-places for the Saṅgha, and apportion the rations of food!' <sup>19</sup>

### *Pattern for Land Demarcation*

That a certain pattern was followed in *demarcating* the tribal land into kula lots is suggested by the peculiar tailoring resorted to in making the robes of the Buddhist monks. In the initial two decades after the attainment of Gautama to Buddhahood, the Buddhist monks used a set of robes called 'cīvara' which were made out of discarded rags stitched together. Cīvara were also called 'Paṃsu-kula' or 'Paṃsu-kūla.' Rhys Davids renders the term as 'out of (rags) taken from the dust-heap'.<sup>20</sup> But, according to Buddhaghoṣa it meant robes made out of rags found in fields (Paṃsukulena' ti te-visatīyā khettesu-uppana- paṃsukulena).<sup>21</sup> The following incident narrated by Vinayapiṭaka will help us to understand the definition of Buddhaghoṣa:

1 Now the Blessed One had remained at Rāja-gaha as long as he thought fit, he set forth on his journey towards Dakkiṇāgiri (the Southern Hills). And the Blessed one beheld how the Magadha rice fields were divided into short pieces, and in rows, and by outside boundaries (or ridges), and by cross boundaries.

On seeing this the Blessed One spake thus to the venerable Ananda: 'Dost Thou perceive, Ananda, how the Magadha rice fields are divided into short pieces, and in rows, and by outside boundaries, and by cross boundaries?'

'Even so, Lord.'

'Could you, Ananda, provide robes of like kind for the Bhikkhus?'

'I could, Lord.'

Then Ananda provided robes of a like kind for many Bhikkhus, and going up to the place where the Blessed One was, he spake thus to the Blessed One: 'May the Blessed One be pleased to look at the robes which I have provided.'

2 Then the Blessed One on that occasion addressed the Bhikkhus and said: 'An able man, O Bhikkhus, is Ananda, of great understanding, O Bhikkhus, is Ananda, in as much as what has been spoken by me in short that can he understand in full, and can make the cross seams, and the intermediate cross seams, and the greater circles, and the lesser circles, and the turning in, and the lining of the turning in, and the collar piece, and the knee piece. And it shall be of torn pieces, roughly sewn together, suitable for a Samana, a thing which his enemies cannot covet. I enjoin upon you, O Bhikkhus, the use of an under robe of torn pieces, and of an upper robe of torn pieces, and of a waist cloth of torn pieces...' <sup>22</sup>

Rhys Davids comments, "... As an Indian field, the common property of the village community, was divided for the purposes of cultivation, across and across, so must also the Bhikkhu's robe be divided ..." <sup>23</sup>

Paṃsu also means earth and kula means kula land. Thus the word itself means tribal land divided into clan lots. But the technical terms of tailoring used in making the paṃsu-kula had become inexplicable even for the great commentator Buddhaghoṣa: "... That some, both of the agricultural and of the tailoring terms, should now be unintelligible to us is not surprising. Buddhaghoṣa himself, as the extracts from his commentary show, was not certain of the meanings of them all." <sup>24</sup>

### *Apportioning Tribal Land*

In order to understand this strange mode of demarcating the tribal land, we have to scrutinize the account of the non-Aryans as recorded by their enemies. Satapatha Brāhmaṇa enjoins upon the sacrificing priests to banish Nirṛti, the goddess of evil, by consigning the black bricks representing her in a natural cleft in the south-westerly extremity of the sacrificial ground.

1 ... Having built the Gāthapatya (one of the three sacred fires maintained by the Aryan clan-chiefs hereditarily and perpetually), the Gods then ascended it,—the Gāthapatya being this (earth) world, it is this world they ascend after completing it. They saw nothing but darkness not to be seen through ...

3 ... While meditating, they saw those Nirṛti bricks;—they piled them, and by them dispelled that darkness, evil; for Nirṛti (corruption, or destruction) is evil; ...

7 ... They (bricks) are baked by (rice) husks, for husks belong to Nirṛti ... They are black ...

8 With them they proceed towards that (south-western) quarter, for that is Nirṛti's quarter ... And anywhere where there is a self-

duced hollow or cleft in the ground, he lays down those (bricks);...<sup>25</sup>

Taittirīya Saṁhitā (II.5.1) narrates the tale of the origin of this cleft called 'irīṇa':

Viśvarūpa, son of Tvaṣṭṛ, was the domestic priest of the gods, and the sister's son of the Asuras. He had three heads, one which drank Soma, one Surā, and one which ate food. He promised openly the share to the gods, secretly to the Asuras. Men promise openly the share to every one; if they promise any one secretly, his share is indeed promised. Therefore Indra was afraid (thinking), 'Such as one is diverting the sovereignty (from me)'. He took his bolt and smote off his heads... He seized with his hand the guilt of slaying him and bore it for a year. Creatures called out upon him, 'Thou art a Brahman slayer'. He appealed to the earth, 'Take a third part of my guilt'. She said, 'Let me choose a boon. I deem that I shall be overcome through digging. Let me not be overcome by that.' He replied, 'Before a year is out it will grow up for thee.' Therefore before the year is out the dug-out portion of earth grows up again. She took a third of his guilt. That became a natural fissure; therefore one who has piled up a fire altar and whose deity is faith should not choose a natural fissure, for that is the colour of guilt.<sup>26</sup>

Keith incorrectly translates 'rāṣṭra' as sovereignty. Rāṣṭra as already explained, meant tribal land. It seems that the function of apportioning the tribal land every year vested in the Brahman and the pattern he had traditionally followed for demarcating the shares was irīṇa. The conjecture is corroborated by the hymn of Taittirīya Saṁhitā which invokes the tribal land (III.4.8), of which a free rendering is given here:

The Mantras should be offered for one who is desirous of (succeeding to the function of apportioning) the tribal land; the rāṣṭra-invoking mantras are the rāṣṭra; verily with the rāṣṭra (-invoking mantras) he wins the rāṣṭra—he becomes the rāṣṭra. They should be offered for oneself; the rāṣṭra (-invoking mantras) are the rāṣṭra, progeny is the rāṣṭra, cattle are the rāṣṭra, in that he becomes the highest he is the rāṣṭra, verily with the rāṣṭra (-invoking mantras) he wins the rāṣṭra, he becomes the best (vasiṣṭha) among his equals. They should be offered for one who is desirous of (succeeding to the function of apportioning) the phratry land (grāma-kāmāya hotavyā); the rāṣṭra (-invoking mantras) are the phratry land, his phratry brothers (sajātāḥ) are the rāṣṭra; he becomes the rāṣṭra. He offers on the dicing place (adhi-devane juhōti); verily on the dicing place he wins over his phratry brothers for him, and being won over they wait upon him... He offers on the self-made irīṇa for liberating himself from Nirṛti...

Thus, the hymn identifies rāṣṭra on tribal land, adhīdevana or dicing board and irīṇa. The latter two words were indeed synonymous even in the early Vedic period. Explaining Vedic dicing, Vedic Index

states, "No (dicing) board appears to have been used, but a depression on which the dice were thrown (adhi-devana, devana, iriṇa) was made in the ground".<sup>27</sup>

*Bali Festivals: Dice Board Pattern for Land*

There are two days in the Hindu calendar which are ritually devoted to gambling. One is the full moon day of Aśvina (September-October), popularly called Kojāgiri Purnimā, and the second is the first day of the bright half of Kārttika (October-November), popularly known as Bali-pratipadā. We are concerned with the Bali-pratipadā.

In Maharashtra people used to say on this day 'Idā-pīḍā-ṭaḷo, Baḷi-rājā yevol' which is understood to mean 'Let calamities go, and let the king Baḷi enter!' But, the word Idā in Sanskrit means food or the deity of food or the earth goddess herself. The compound etymologically should mean 'calamity upon food.' Hence, the Marathi benediction means, 'Let calamity upon food go, and let king Baḷi enter!'

Onam is the most important festival of the Malayālis, during which it is customary to play at dice by drawing a dice board on the ground. E M S Namboodiripad describes the myth that gave rise to the festival as follows:

Once upon a time, the whole earth was being ruled by Emperor Mahabali. He was a good, benign emperor, extremely solicitous for the welfare of his subjects. Peace and prosperity reigned in the land. There were no quarrels among the people; nor was there any inequality between one man and another. Everybody had as much of food, clothes, houses and all other good things in life as he or she desired. It was to such a good land and to its good emperor that God Vishnu came in the guise of a dwarf (Vamana). As in the case of every visitor, the emperor asked the dwarf what he wanted. The dwarf asked for that much of land as could be measured by his three steps and it was readily granted. The dwarf, however, turned himself into such a huge giant that the whole earth had already been covered by the first two steps that he took. There being no more space to put his third step, the dwarf put it on the head of the emperor and sent him down to the nether world.

Now that it had become clear that this was not an ordinary dwarf but God Vishnu himself, the emperor bowed low and asked for a boon which was readily granted—that he should be allowed, once a year, to come up to earth and satisfy himself that his former subjects are still happy and prosperous. It was fixed that the emperor would come on the Thiruvonam day of the Chingom month (a day that falls sometime between August 15 and September 15).

The people of the earth thereafter decided that ten days before the Thiruvonam of Chingom, they would start making preparations to receive their beloved emperor. On the day of the emperor's visit and for three days thereafter, they will once again live as they had lived

during the emperor's time. They eat the best food, put on the best clothes, entertain themselves with the most enjoyable dances, songs and games . . . Nobody works on that day, even domestic servants being allowed to go home and enjoy themselves.<sup>28</sup>

It was because the Asura emperor Bali maintained among his subjects equality in the shares of land that his subjects were happy. *Apportioning periodically the rastra land equally among the tribal members was originally the most important function of kingship.* The reality has vanished with Vṛtra and Bali, but the ritual of Rāja-sūya or royal consecration has preserved it, though it has become unintelligible to the myth that explains the ritual. The Rāja-sūya sacrifice (VS. X. 17-29), after initiating the King-elect to Brahman-ship (the significance of which will be explained later on), enjoins that the Adhvaryu priest should give the consecrated king five dice and a wooden sword called sphya. The king then invokes the sphya to draw a dice board on the prepared ground. After drawing the figure of a dice board on the ground, the king places the five dice upon it. The priest then calls upon the dice to make the king fit to sit among his phratry-brothers (Sajātānām madhymeṣṭayāya).<sup>29</sup> Iriṇa or dice board was the ideal pattern of the yearly demarcation and apportionment of the rāstra land by the Asura kings.

### *Dice Board in Urban Planning*

Asva-ghoṣa in his 'Saundara-Nanda' (I. 28-33) narrates a strange account of the origin of Kapila-vastu, the capital of the Śākya tribe:

Atha udaka-kalaśaṁ gṛhya teṣāṁ vṛddhi-cikīrṣayā

Muniḥ sa viyad utpatya tān uvāca nṛpa-ātmaajān—

[One day the sage Gautama wishing to confer prosperity on them flew up and bade the (four Śākya) princes—]

Yā patet kalaśād asmād akṣayya salilān mahīm

Dhārā tān anatīkramya mām anveta yathā-kramaṁ.

[“Follow without deviating the current of water that I shall pour on the earth from this pitcher containing inexhaustible water.”]

Tataḥ sa tair anugataḥ syandanasthair nabhe-gataḥ.

Tad āśrama-maḥi—prāntaṁ paricikṣepa vāṇinā.

[Then that sage, followed by the chariot-driving (princes), proceeded in the sky pouring (a line of) water in the region surrounding the hermitage.]

[Aṣṭā-padam iva ālikhya nimittaiḥ surabhīkṛtam

Tān uvāca muniḥ sthitvā bhūmi-pāla-sutān idam—

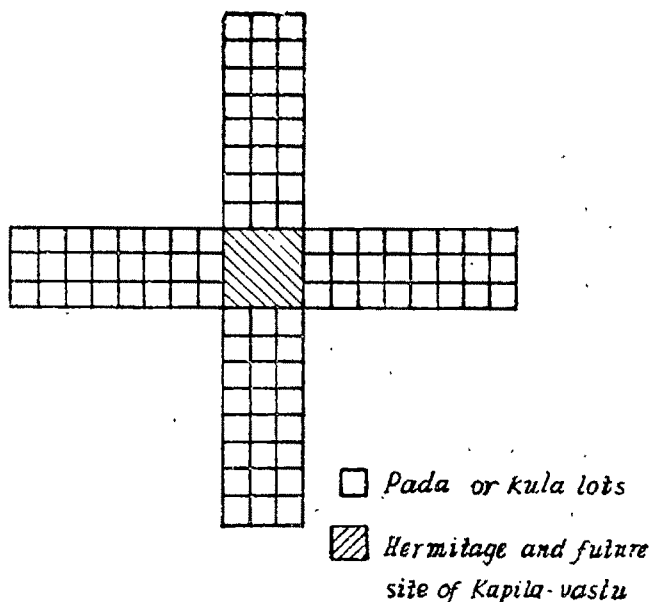
[And (he) drew a pattern of aṣṭā-pada demarcated beautifully by boundary marks. Then coming to a halt the sage bade the princes—]

Asmin dhārā-parikṣipte nemi-cinhita-lakṣaṇe

Nirmimīdhvaṁ puram yūyam mayi yāte tri-viṣṭape.

“After my ascension to heaven erect a city in this region (according to the plan demarcated by the line of water and the felines (of your chariots).”]

Indian dice board, called *aṣṭā-pada*, is like this:



*Culla-vagga* of *Vinaya-piṭaka* (I. 3.21) records along with *aṣṭā-pada* another variety of dice board called *daśa-pada* or a dice board having rows of ten houses. (*aṭṭha-pade pi kiṇanti, daśa-pade pi kiṇanti . . .*). Hence, it is logical to presume that various patterns of *iriṇas* were current along with, or before, the standard *aṣṭā-pada*.

### *Ninetysix Clans*

*Aṣṭā-pada* is called 'cau-paṭa' in Marathi. Though *pada* also means a plot of ground,<sup>8</sup> *paṭa* has no such sense, and it primarily means a piece of cloth. The total number of houses (*gharas*) in an *aṣṭā-pada* are ninety-six. The original Marāṭhā tribe consisted of ninety-six clans *śaṇṇava kuḷi*). Irawati Karve says:

. . . All those who are supposed to be true Marathas belong to ninety-six clans. The actual lists given by Marāṭha writers however generally contain more than ninety-six names. Among these ninety-six there are concentric circles of nobility and status. The highest are called 'Panchkuli'-'of the five clans.' These are the clans of Jadhav, More, Shirke, Pawar, etc. The next division is "seven clans" which includes Bhosle and so on.

The rule for marriage is that the five . . . can marry among themselves or can marry girls from the other clans but do not give their daughters to any one outside of the five clans. The seven-clan division can marry among themselves, or can give their daughters to the "five clan" or receive girls from all the rest except "the five-clan" division. Thus the hypergamous clan arrangement is like that of the Rajputs and Khatris of Northern India. But the totemistic exogamous Devakas

seem to have analogies only with the southern exogamous groupings described later. The difference between the Rajput arrangement and this is that among the Rajputs Suryabansa, the Chandrabansa, etc. are exclusive of each other, while here each inner circle is contained in the larger circle. The five-clan are part of the seven-clan and of the 96 clan. Not so the Bansa, except that they belong to the same Rajput caste. They can be represented visually on a ladder but not as concentric circles. . . .<sup>81</sup>

We can only say at this juncture that the Maratha tribe originally must have been constituted of five or seven phratries and ninety-six clans. It has already been shown that the Indian dice board, before being standardized into an aṣṭā-pada, was in vogue in various variants, such as datśapada, etc. Hence, the four (and prior to it more than four) paṭas must have represented the phratries of a tribe.

### *Allotment for Equality*

Why were the houses in every paṭa arranged in three rows? Land could not be of equal fertility even in the region inhabited by one phratry. It was bound to give rise to inequality of yield, resulting in inequality among the clans in every phratry. Hence, the land of every phratry was classified into good, middling and indifferent, and lots were drawn for every class of land separately by the clan chiefs in a given phratry. The ancient Indians were not only completely conversant with this classification of cultivated land, but had for ages been accustomed to adapt their agriculture to these categories of cultivated land. Asibandhaka-putta, the village chief (gāmāṇi) of Nālandā in Magadha kingdom, questioned the propriety of Buddha's preaching his doctrine in three different manners to three different categories of people, namely the Buddhist fraternity, the lay followers of Buddha's religion, and followers of non-Buddhist sects. Buddha illustrated his answer by the simile of an agriculturist householder who sows his best field first, then the middling, and lastly the indifferent ("... iddhassu kassakassa gaha-patino tīṇi khetṭāni-skāṃ khetṭaṃ aggāṃ, ekam khetṭaṃ majjhimāṃ, ekam khetṭaṃ hīnāṃ jangalaṃ ūsaraṃ pāpa bhumi").<sup>82</sup>

In order to maintain the strictest equality, the Pathan tribals drew lots separately for the three categories of land:

The practice of periodical redistribution was designed to maintain so far as possible the real equality of the holdings in relation to the changing needs of the families. It was effected by lot, and in some cases the procedure was very elaborate, as may be seen in the following account from Peshawar.

The areas were taken by drawing lots. . . . If the land to be allotted was variable in quality, the clan authorities would arrange a number of circles or series, consisting of good, middling, and indifferent soils or distinguished in some other way. Then the groups of sharers would have to take their lands partly out of each series . . . But in any case,

in spite of the soil classification, inequality in the holdings was not altogether excluded, and so a system of periodical exchange or redistribution was long followed.<sup>33</sup>

Thomson has reversed the sequence. Men first periodically divided the tribal land by lot-taking without any regard to its classification, for that knowledge is late in comprehension. Then in course of time the periodical distribution by lot-taking is modified by three separate lot-takings for the three categories of land.

It can now be safely concluded, that the tribal land was first distributed among its constituent phratries and then the phratries distributed their land among their respective clans.

### *Puzzle Solved*

It is only on the basis of the foregoing discussion that the Rk I. 124.7 can be understood:

Abhrātā iva pūṃsa eti praciḥ grātārug iva sanaye dhanānām  
Jāya iva patya uṣatī suvāsā Uṣā hasrā iva ni riṇīte apsaḥ.

Lakshman Sarup translates it as follows:

‘Like a brotherless maiden who goes back to men, like one who ascends the pillar of the assembly-room for the acquisition of wealth, like a well-dressed wife longing for her husband, dawn displays her beauty like a smiling damsel...’<sup>34</sup>

The Rk has not ceased to puzzle scholars right from the time of Yāska. Kosambi is no exception and has the following to offer as explanation:

... In i. 124.7 *uṣā hasreva ni rinīte apsaḥ*, she reveals her secret charms like a lascivious woman, or like a smiling one, as you take *hasra*. But in the same ṛk she goes towards men like a brotherless woman, mounting the throne; platform, or stage for the sake of wealth: *abhrateva pūṃsa eti praciḥ, gartarug iva sanaye dhananam*, where the meaning of *gartarug* is not clear. Obviously the reference is to one who has no brother to make a match for her, hence must display herself upon some high place to collect a dowry. . .<sup>35</sup>

Nirukta (III .5) can explain the Rk only by turning to South India. Durga’s account of the usage in South India is conflicting:

Durga does not seem to have a very clear idea of the peculiar custom to which he refers. At one place, he says: ‘If a sonless woman goes there, she obtains wealth. The gamblers give her wealth. This is the custom of the southern people’. At another place, he says: ‘The woman who has lost her son and husband mounts it, i. e. takes her seat on it in the midst of the gamblers. Then she obtains wealth from the relatives of her husband’. Whether the wealth was given by the gamblers or by the relatives of the deceased husband is not made clear; the precise nature of the custom remains therefore doubtful...<sup>36</sup>

It only means that even in the matrilineal south, the matriarchal custom of the early Rg-vedic India had vanished long ago. The solution

of the riddle depends on the correct interpretation of the two terms: 'gartāruk' and 'abhrāta'. Let us first take up the former term.

One of the meanings of 'garta' is the assembly hall of the tribe. Another meaning, according to Durga, is 'the seat or place where the dice is thrown' (akṣa-nirvapana-pītham).<sup>87</sup> If we collate these two meanings with the foregoing elaboration, it becomes clear that Uṣā is compared to to a devinī tribal mother, who apportions the tribal wealth or land by lot-taking. Atharva-vedic hymn VI. 108.10 clinches the issue. In it two Apsarases, the presiding deities of dice, are addressed as 'Rāṣṭra-bhṛt', communal, rāṣṭra-land-bearing.<sup>88</sup>

As for the term 'abhrātā', another tribal mother, Sara-mā, literally meaning river mother, tells the Paṇis in Rk. X. 108 that she knows no brotherhood or sisterhood (Na aham veda bhrātṛtvam no svaṣṛtvam . . .) To be a tribal mother and not to be a kinsman of anybody in her tribe, is a contradiction in terms. In order to understand this contradictory reality we will have to turn again to the function of brahma-vādinī.

### *Initiation Rites*

It has already been noted that a woman who was to become a clan-mother (kula-pā), or a phratry-mother (janadapa-kalyāṇi) or a tribal mother (gaṇikā), had to be initiated as a brahma-vādinī. Now, what is initiation? Initiation was a ritual by which a person was admitted to tribal membership. Baudhāyana, one of the earliest law-givers, declares that a person, though he may belong to the higher three castes, namely Brahmin, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya, loses his Aryan-hood if not initiated, and becomes a Śūdra: "6. They do not put any (religious) restrictions on the acts of a (child) before the investiture with the girdle (is performed). For he is on a level with a Sudra before (his second) birth through the Veda." (Vasiṣṭha, II. 6; Gautama, II. 1).<sup>89</sup>

Initiation was an obligatory rite in all tribal societies the world over. Fraser sums up: "... Among many savage tribes, especially such as are known to practice totemism, it is customary for lads at puberty to undergo certain initiatory rites, of which one of the commonest is a pretence of killing the lad and bringing him to life again. . ."<sup>90</sup>

The initiation rite among the Arabs was circumcision and women were the initiators of the rite:

Female circumcision was an immemorial practice among the Arabs. Indeed, according to the Arab tradition, it preceded male circumcision; it was said to have been first practised by Sarah on Hagar; afterwards both Sarah and Abraham by order of Allah, circumcised themselves. Its prevalence in Arabia was known to Strabo . . . According to Ibn-al-Athir, Muhammad pronounced circumcision to be 'an ordinance for men and honourable for women'.<sup>91</sup>

Initiation was originally a puberty rite. "... From the reference to the board and from the words 'this man (ayam puruṣaḥ)' occurring in the Atharvaveda VIII. 1.1 and elsewhere it appears probable that upana-

yana was performed rather later in those ancient days than in the days of the Sūtras."<sup>42</sup>

Puberty was more evident, more sacred and more productive in women than in men. Hence, it is but natural that initiation should have started with women, and with the rise of patriarchy adopted by men to imbue themselves with the female sacredness and authority.

Aryan initiatory rite called upanayana meant taking a young person to a teacher for Vedic studentship.<sup>43</sup> The termination of this studentship (brahma-carya) was performed by a ritual called 'Samāvartana'. Aśvalayana Gṛhya-sūtra (III. 8.11) prescribes that the Samāvartana should be performed by applying ointment to the face by a Brahmin, to both the arms by a Kṣatriya, to the belly by a Vaiśya and to the sexual organ by a woman (Upasthaṁ strī). This peculiar samāvartana rite for women was not just symbolical. It meant that the brahma-cārinī was on the point of attaining puberty: "... Harīta prescribes that in the case of women samāvartana took place before the appearance of menses. Therefore brahmavādinī women had upanayana performed in the 8th year from conception, then they studied Vedic lore and finished studenthood at the age of puberty ..."<sup>44</sup>

Kuntī, the mother of Karna and the Paṇḍavas, is the classic illustration of this point. She was the daughter of Śūra, a clan-chief of the Vṛṣṇi phratry of the Yādava tribe, and was adopted by Kuntī-bhoja, head of the Kuntī clan of the bhoja phratry of the same tribe (III.303.23). Kuntī-bhoja handed over Kuntī to a Brahmin teacher for initiation into the Atharva-śiras magical lore (III. 304.13; III, 305.20), in whose service she remained for a year (III.305.12). After samāvartana she attained puberty (III.306.3). In order to test the efficacy of the magical lore imparted to her by the Brahmin teacher, she recited one of the mantras which was in invocation of the sun god (III.306.7). The god came down in glorious human form and expressed his desire to copulate with her. Afraid of the ire of her kinsmen, she entreated the god to return to his celestial abode. The god pacified her misgivings by the following verses (III.307.12-16).

Na te pitā na te mātā guravo vā śuci-smite

Prabhavanti vara-ārohe bhadraṁ te śruṇu me vācaḥ!

[You have neither father, nor mother, nor elders who can govern you, O auspiciously smiling one! May you prosper, O of the slender waist, and lend your ear to what I have to say!]

Sarvān kāmāyate yasmāt kame dhatośca bhāvinī!

Tasmāt kanya iha suśroṇi sva-tantrā vara-varṇiṇi!

[The word kanya (virgin), O beautiful one, is derived from the root kam, and means one who can desire anybody (with whom she is infatuated); hence, O fair one of voluptuous hips, (know that) a virgin is (by nature) free.]

An-āvṛtaḥ striyaḥ sarvā narāś ca vara-varṇiṇi !

Sva-bhāva eṣa lokānām vikāro 'nya iti smṛtaḥ.

[The original and natural order of this world, O fair one, is the unrestrainedness of women and men in their relation with each other, while rites like marriages are but artificial in nature.]

Sā mayā saha saṅgamyā puraḥ kanya bhaviṣyasi

Putraś ca te mahābāhur bhaviṣyati mahāyaśaḥ."

[You shall again gain your virginhood after uniting with me. And the son you shall bear is fated to become mighty and victorious.]

### *Tribal Mother's Role*

The tribal mother was a lifelong virgin, and uninhibited by kinship bonds in her sexual relations with her tribal members. Hence, the term 'a-bhrātā' should mean 'uninhibited by kinship in sexual relations.'

That is why as a tribal mother Kuntī commanded her five sons to enjoy apportioning their alms in the person of Draupadī equitably (Bhūṅkta iti sametya sarve. I. 190.2). Yudhiṣṭhira, the eldest of the Pāṇḍavas, assured king Drupada of the Pāñcalas (I. 194. 30-31):

Na me vāg aṅṛtaṁ prāha na adharme dhīyate matiḥ

Evaṁ ea eva vadaty Ambā mama ca etan manogataṁ.

[I am not speaking untruth, nor my mind likes to indulge in irreligiousness. I am convinced that my mother is uttering what is the (sacred) truth.]

Eṣa dharmo dhruvo rājamś cara enam avicārayan

Mā ca śaṅkā tatra te syāt kathaṁ cid api pārthiva ! "

[This is the law of eternal sanctity, O king, and you should abide by it without having any misgivings. May you not entertain any doubt whatsoever, O ruler of earth!]

The Khasi tribals of Assam preserved their matriarchal society up to the first quarter of the present century. The tribe (kur) was descended from a primal ancestress called Ka Iawbei,<sup>45</sup> which was succinctly expressed by their saying 'from the woman sprang the clan.'<sup>46</sup> The phratry was called 'kpoh.' Land belonged to the clan (iing) and the clan was headed by the 'young' grandmother (Ka Iawbei Khynraw).<sup>47</sup> The produce of the land was equally divided among the clan members by this clan mother. "... The male members of the family may cultivate such lands, but they must carry all the produce to the house of their mother, who will divide it amongst the members of the family ..."<sup>48</sup>

But the mother did not divide the communal product equally in the literal and quantitative sense of the term. The physical capacity of the individual clan members was also taken into account in this division. Though Kuntī ordered her sons to divide the alms equally, when it came to actual apportionment, she is found to have made it in an 'unequal' manner. When the Pāṇḍavas handed over to Kuntī every day the alms that they had secured during their daily rounds in the town of Eka-cakrā, she divided the food secured as alms into two equal portions, one of which

was partaken by Kuntī and her four sons, namely, Yudhiṣṭhira, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva, while the other half was eaten solely by Bhīma (I. 156. 5-6):

Nivedayanti sma tadā Kuntyā bhaikṣyaṁ sadā niśi  
Tayā vibhaktān bhāgāṁs te bhuñjate sma pṛthak pṛthak.

[Then (after returning from their round of alms) at night they handed over the alms to Kuntī. The food then, after being apportioned among them by her, each ate his share individually.

Ardhaṁ te bhuñjate vīrāḥ saha mātṛā paran-tapāḥ  
Ardhaṁ sarvasya bhaikṣyasya Bhīmo bhuñkte mahā-balaḥ.

[Half of it was partaken by the (four) enemy-harassing heroes along with their mother, while the (remaining) half of the whole alms was eaten by the mighty Bhīma.]

<sup>1</sup> W D Whitney, *Atharva-veda Samhita*, p 214.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 464-465.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p 397.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p 205.

<sup>5</sup> D D Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, p 150.

<sup>6</sup> A B Keith *The Veda of the Black Yajus School*, etc, H O S, Vol XVIII, p 272.

<sup>7</sup> *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol XVII, pp 200-204.

<sup>8</sup> J. Kashyap, (ed) *Vinaya-pitaka, Mahavagga-pali*, VIII 12. 18.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, *Cullavagga-pali*, IV. 5.

<sup>10</sup> *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol XX, pp 56-57.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p 221.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> The rendering should be 'voluntary religious contributions'.

<sup>15</sup> *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol XI, pp 3-4.

<sup>16</sup> L H Morgan, *Ancient Society*, p 70.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 228-229, 292-293.

<sup>18</sup> *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol XI, pp 6-7.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol XX, pp 4-5.

<sup>20</sup> *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol XVII, p 156.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 207-210.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. XLI, pp 317, 320-321.

<sup>26</sup> *The Veda of the Black Yajus School* etc., H O S, Vol XVIII, pp 188-189.

<sup>27</sup> *Vedic Index*, Vol I, pp 3-5.

<sup>28</sup> E M S Namboodiripad, *Kerala: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, pp 29-30.

<sup>29</sup> Shridharshastri Pathak, *Vajasaneyi Samhita* (Marathi translation), pp 150-155; *Taittiriya Samhita*, 1.8.16; A B Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upanisads* pp 342-343.

<sup>30</sup> Apte's *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, S. V.

<sup>31</sup> Irawati Karve, *Kinship-Organisation in India*, p 177.

<sup>32</sup> J Kashyap (ed) *Samyutta-nikaya-pali*, 42.7.7,

<sup>33</sup> G Thomson, *Studies in Ancient Greek Society*, Vol I, p 305.

<sup>34</sup> L Sarup, *Nighantu and Nirukta*, p 40.

<sup>35</sup> D D Kosambi, *Myth and Reality*, p 62.

- 36 L Sarup, *Nighantu and Nirukta*, p 252.
- 37 *Ibid.*
- 38 W D Whitney, *Atharva-veda Samhita*, pp 367-368.
- 39 *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol XIV, p 150.
- 40 J G Frazer, *Balder the Beautiful*, p 225.
- 41 R Briffault, *The Mothers*, Vol III, p 323.
- 42 P V Kane, *History of Dharmasastras*, Vol II, p i., p 270.
- 43 *Ibid.*, pp 268-269.
- 44 *Ibid.*, pp 333-334.
- 45 P R T Gurdon, *The Khasis*, pp XIX-XX, 63; 111.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p 82.
- 47 *Ibid.*, p 63.
- 48 *Ibid.*, p 88.

## Report

### *The Alienated White Student in the United States*

*A P Balachandran*

THE bake sale is a rare and gentle method for raising money among the American students. With an investment of fifteen or twenty dollars, a group of students prepare apple sauce cake and baked banana bread and similar delicacies and sell it on the campus at an improvised counter. A day's business can fetch as much as \$ 120.00. The profits are often donated to radical causes like the legal defence of the Attica prisoners indicted for murder. One such group was recently approached for setting up a bake sale for famine relief in India. The response was discouraging. After a momentary initial interest, the students did not care to pursue the matter.

As reflected in the incident, the campus rebel in the U S today is inclined to be limited in his sympathies. He is aware of a futility in his existence, but his struggles at personal liberation are likely to be narrow in scope. There is activity on the campus for helping the American poor. But there is at best a vague and indifferent interest in the misery of the Bolivian miners or the starvation of the Indian masses. The youth movement in the U S increasingly looks inwards for an escape from the sordid reality. Consistent with such a trend, there is a growing fascination with emancipation through mysticism and religion. The typical rebel in an American university is no revolutionary, he is a liberal reformer with a touch of defiance and on occasion with dreams of mystic liberation.

The discontent of the white American student is rooted in the want of meaningful economic functions for a significant number of educated youth. It is also fostered by the capitalization and urbanization of the economic life which have eroded the integrity of the rural community and the family and caused the decay of transparent and direct relationships of the student to the society at large.

#### *Economic Opportunities*

Capitalist growth spawns a myriad of activities which are objectively worthless and which derive their legitimacy from the needs of the system. Such for example are much of the service sector, and the production sectors engaged in tasks like making a new brand of mouth wash every

few months. A significant number of students are being obliged to seek careers in activities of this sort. In conditions like those that prevail in India, where jobs are scarce and a decent life has to be fought for, the quality of work seldom provokes a criticism. Rather, the intelligent youngster is likely to be anxious to succeed in terms of the social order. In the U S, for a white youth from a secure economic background, survival is relatively easy. He is thus less oppressed by thoughts of a livelihood and can afford the time and energy to develop a sensitivity towards the nature of his future functions. Disaffection with the society begins to set in when these functions are found wanting in creativity or human values.

It has been suggested to me by George Stern that a deeper reason for student unhappiness resides in the emergence of the students as a group of 'surplus population' in the society with increasingly fewer tasks to perform for the economy and that their situation is not unlike that of the blacks and other depressed classes. There is no doubt that such an alienation is in fact operative. It may also be sufficiently widespread to provide a sound economic basis for an analysis of the student situation. However, despite the importance of this idea, I will not pursue it further here for lack of adequate knowledge.

### *Community and Family Relations*

Before the dominance of the market economy, there was a time when the interdependence of people was more obvious and the notion of the solidarity of the community and the family had a good deal of meaning. The unity in the economic life of relatively autonomous communities led to meaningful relationships as well. In areas where the forces of capitalism began to dominate, this pattern of comparative isolation began to disintegrate. The economic life of individuals or groups came to depend progressively more on the world market. With the emergence of giant enterprises and monopoly capitalism, more primitive modes of production began to decay and disappear. The partial insulation of the communities was breached and they were exposed to the world at large.

Sociologists, Marxists in particular, have studied in depth the social consequences of such a global dependence. As the individual begins to see that his livelihood depends not so much on his immediate milieu as on external forces, he comes to feel that his ties to the community, which were once sources of security and identity, are chains of incarceration. Such ties limit his freedom which he needs for his fulfilment and success. Thus relationships which make demands and are based on nothing more substantial than social and familial loyalties suffer attrition and are replaced by transient companionships of convenience or necessity. Economic compulsions force people to leave their communities to seek their fortunes elsewhere. The coherence of self-enclosed existence of small groups breaks down. The joint family disintegrates into the nuclear family.

The break up of communities and the joint family system is well

advanced in the U S. There still remain some areas where the penetration of the market economy is weak or incomplete and the earlier modes of existence persist. These areas however are usually economically depressed and their inhabitants tend to be demoralized. Welfare doles are likely to play a significant role in the livelihood of such regions. They are in the nature of survivals from a past age and will no doubt fade away in time.

In the urban centres of the U S, there are indications that even the nuclear family is beginning to disintegrate. In a pre-capitalist and pre-industrial mode of life, the family tends to function co-operatively and its members have a more or less useful role assigned by the division of labour. The necessity for co-operation among the members of a family however, is muted in the urban life of the advanced Western countries. Children are but seldom required to help the parents in their work. They are also rarely needed as additional wage earners for the family upkeep or as an old age insurance. Woman too is not essential for the maintenance of the household; there are simpler means of managing it with modern gadgets. Children and women are becoming economic liabilities. Both marriage and having children are therefore beginning to be matters of personal choice. With the change in the nature of the bonds which sustain the family and their gradual loss of economic rationality, the nuclear family shows definite signs of decline. In the cities, it is more and more accepted that children of seventeen or eighteen should leave their parents and live in a separate flat. Among the young, the formality of marriage is increasingly replaced with cohabitation by consent.

The dominant reason for the growth of the women's liberation movement in the universities and elsewhere during the past few years also seems to be these changing economic roles of the members of a family. In the traditional American society, the primary work of a woman has been that of a household labourer. She used to accept this function as appropriate and did not regard it with hostility. The current developments threaten to destroy the necessity for such an activity and thereby to make her superfluous for the material life of the society. In contrast to a male, there is hardly any important job for a woman outside the family and when she loses her job outside as well, she becomes truly an economic surplus for the society and has to be maintained by its charity. The emergence and persistent militancy of the women's liberation movement receive a vital stimulus from such a menacing situation. There is a thrust in it for the transformation of woman's social position so that she becomes once again more useful than as a sexual partner. The pressures on a sensitive woman to define a new role for herself are frequently severe enough to cause a comprehensive revolt against all her current duties which restrain her in her struggle. The endless debates on abortion and on the precise instant of time when the foetus acquires life shows the depths of estrangement of the militant woman from even the processes of

life. Under the prevailing conditions, of course, procreation is often an oppression for the woman.

### *Student Movements*

We have seen that capitalist growth and its consequences for the social corpus have caused the emergence of a type of white student who feels estranged from his family and community and is confronted by a sterile future in terms of work. The responses of the students to their social alienation have assumed the form of political action, the espousal of ideologies which will enable them to tolerate or ignore this condition and experimentation with new life styles. It should be emphasised that activism of any sort has been confined at all times to a minority of students. Still, it is these minorities who consciously attempt to shape the future and are responsible for much of the ideological forms and actions we associate with the American universities.

The awakening social activism in the universities became manifest in the early sixties when the students went south to participate in the civil rights movement of the blacks. The diffusion of such an activism continued for almost a decade. Students began to learn about the Indochina war and about oppression in and out of the country. They turned progressively to the Left. The Students for Democratic Society (SDS) which was originally reformist in character, was transformed into a radical group. There also appeared splinter organizations like the Weathermen with a theory and practice for revolutionary change. The Indochina war played a decisive role in these trends. It touched the students intimately through the military draft and when they began to examine the causes for which they were called upon to disrupt or sacrifice their lives, many found them unjust. Education about Indochina then became for some a prelude to a study of the entire socio-economic order.

Throughout the past decade or so, a feature of student activism has been that it has often been in the nature of a sympathetic response to the struggle of other oppressed groups. The early sixties show this characteristic transparently. The mid-sixties saw an intensification of the minority liberation struggles and the formation of the Black Panther Party and, similar organizations. The growth of campus radicalism was stimulated by this surge of militancy elsewhere although its significance at this period was not comparable to that of the Indochina war and the draft. If the sophisticated fringe of the student activists is left out, it is doubtful that this response was characterized by any mature appreciation of the social reality. It was rather like a declaration of sympathy for the predicament of groups whom the students perceived as fellow sufferers in a somewhat hostile world. Student activism on behalf of minorities has not led to any significant reciprocal solidarity between the two groups. The white university student and the coloured ghetto-dweller are divided too deeply by their social interests and backgrounds for sustained collaboration or effective communication.

### *Drugs and Mystic Religion*

During the mid-sixties, even as the campus was being increasingly radicalized, there emerged attempts to escape social reality altogether with the help of drugs and religion. The politically-involved student also participated in such movements in his search for a satisfactory vision of life. The most visible manifestation of these trends used to be the hippie culture. The latter is no longer significant while the consumption of drugs to prolong a moment of ecstasy or to sense an esoteric truth has become integrated in the campus way of life. Drug experimentations have led the students to an interest in mysticism and eastern religions and they are acquiring some sort of scholarship and practice in disciplines like *Advaita* and *Zen*. The courses in the university which draw the largest crowds these days deal with magic and mysticism while a growing body of *yogis*, fraudulent and otherwise, are discovering followers among the American youth. Christian revivalism and the Jesus Movement are also elements in such trends which strive to mystify or to escape the social realities.

Alongside the popularity of religious and mystic thought, we see a rejuvenation of the philosophy that Man is eternally condemned to loneliness and suffering and that this timeless ontological solitude is not rooted in the nature of the current society. Heidegger and Kafka are more talked about in the class rooms than are Marx and Lukacs. The vision of Man at the mercy of unintelligible terrors and struggling in solitude for deliverance finds a sympathetic response among the youth. Co-existent with this notion of eternal solitude, there is also the prevalent notion that Man is intrinsically evil and that it is therefore hopeless to try to change the society into a just one. Ideologies of this sort are acceptable to the society at large and are encouraged by the intellectual ambience and the educational processes. They rationalize loneliness and suffering and by the contention that there is no escape from this state, make a mockery of efforts at social change. Often enough, the alienated student is persuaded by such philosophies and turns inwards for truth and meaning. Thus the philosophies, which picture Man as a prisoner of solitude and evil, shape and are shaped by the current religious trends.

### *Co-operative Life Forms*

In the late sixties, in many universities, students of similar interest began to band together and attempt co-operative living to rediscover their togetherness with fellow beings. In many ways, this was and continues to be an attempt to create a substitute for the decaying family life. In a typical co-op, one finds several boys and girls living together in a house and occasionally participating in social and political activities together. The hippie culture with its communes and notions of brotherhood of Man was no doubt an influence in the infancy of the co-op experimentations. Besides being an arrangement for relating to people, the co-op at times also means to the students a purposeful social example whereby an alternative way of life is brought to the attention of the community at large. The

latter regretfully tends to be hostile to the co-ops and tries to break them up by legal harassment. There are also a few co-ops of people with radical political programmes. The members of a co-op are likely to keep changing frequently due to the transient nature of students. Further, unlike the joint family in a precapitalist era, such a mode of life lacks economic rationality for the general public so that its diffusion on any significant scale into the society at large is improbable. It is thus unlikely that enduring communes will emerge from this life style or that it will be popular outside the universities.

### *Containment of Dissent*

The American state and the bulk of society have generally regarded the radical movements as a threat to the social order. Accordingly they have consciously or otherwise reacted in a multiplicity of ways to contain them or divert them to harmless tasks. The ecology movement provides an example of such a containment by the fraternal embrace of the established interests. A few years ago, it began to attract the idealist youth as a means of protest against the wanton destruction of nature by the economy and the society. Then the movement often implied a criticism of the social order. Ecology has since become a function of the state and private enterprise as well: even oil companies run advertisements on the subject. The policies of the Nixon government towards the military draft gives yet another instance of this sort. A principal cause for the unrest among the students was the draft and the damage it inflicted on their lives. The automation of the Indochinese war and the reduction in the volume of the draft were apparently in part designed to neutralize this cause. The student militancy did indeed subside when the draft became less of a threat.

Benign accommodation has not been the only response of the ruling interests to the growth of radicalism. Several of the Black Panthers were shot dead in Chicago and elsewhere. Malcolm X and Martin Luther King were assassinated. Militant groups of any consequence have been ceaselessly harassed by the state and reactionary forces. Such techniques of repression have been quite successful. The SDS is no longer significant in the universities. The Black Panthers have become so weak that even the press does not bother to castigate them to the extent common a few years ago. The country was once resonant with the strident voice of black militancy; that voice is now but a whisper. During the last two years or so, the American Indians have begun to act against their oppression. We may anticipate that their voice too will be stilled in time by the power of the state.

Now, in 1974, the campus is quiet and peaceful. The student who was active in the sixties is either a student no longer or is relatively isolated and devoid of any bright hope for the future. The recruits to the universities in the seventies are by and large socially passive. Those who experience alienation and a lack of identity tend to seek meaning in

drugs and mysticism and co-operative life. There is a desire among the youth to shut out the secular reality altogether. The women's liberation movement is among the few organized forces which undertake political action. Besides the causes we have discussed, the lack of a significant militancy elsewhere has also undoubtedly contributed to the decline of student dissent. Thus it was suggested earlier that a good deal of student activism was in the nature of a declaration of solidarity with militant minority groups. Containment of these groups was therefore helpful in tranquillizing the students. There is a want of movements in the country which can influence and teach the students on a continuing basis. The American working class and its institutions are by and large notoriously conservative. Among the intellectuals, the commitment to humanism and radical scholarship is weak or absent so that the education of students on the nature of the society tends to be bland. The eviction of 'subversive' elements from the academic ranks during the McCarthy era in the early fifties is partly responsible for this state of affairs. Many of the reasons for the student militancy of the last decade still persist, but as a rule the solutions are no longer sought in vigorous social and political terms.

*(I am grateful to George Stern for several discussions and suggestions. The criticisms of Don Salisbury and Cassio Sigaud have also been very valuable).*

## COMMUNICATION

### *Kishan Singh on the Poetry of Warris Shah*

IN the article on the eighteenth-century Punjabi poet Warris Shah (*Social Scientist*, Number 12, July 1973) Kishan Singh makes an attempt to evolve a synthesis of Marxism with idealism. He launches a series of imaginary postulates to maintain a semblance of scientific assessment. In doing this, what shows through most clearly is Kishan Singh's own idealistic approach.

Kishan Singh asserts that the *ishk* of Warris Shah's hero Heer is humanized love and like *Naam* (the Divine Word), it can purify a mind defiled and dehumanized by the proverbial sins.<sup>1</sup> He runs down Shankara's Advaita Vedanta and lauds the Bhakti movement and Sufism as revolutionary.<sup>2</sup> His *maya* is not Cosmic Illusion, but an embodiment of selfishness and greed. *Mayavad*, a metaphysical brand of Shankara's idealism, denies evolution. Kishan Singh, however, imparts a different meaning to this concept in consonance with the Bhakti-Sufi-Sikh version of spiritualism.

Such a fallacious argumentation is interspersed with quotations from the Marxian classics *Anti-Duhring* and *The German Ideology*, and a couple of books on socialist humanism by Erich Fromm. Ostensibly to suit his subjective approach, these quotations are inserted out of context and lack the coherence of Marxian reasoning.

Marxism has its own philosophy, the dialectical and historical materialism, which is opposed to idealism. It is by no means a speculative pseudo-science as some 'theoreticians' try to make out. It consistently combats whatever goes under the garb of idealism. No amount of dialectical reasoning can turn idealism into a progressive ideology. Marxists will never sacrifice dialectics at the altar of spiritualism which has always served the interests of the ruling classes. In order to blunt the weapons of class struggle the ruling classes are on the look-out for those ideologues who can twist reality and distort the truth with their essentially spiritualist contributions.

#### *Religious Brand of Idealism*

In the ideological struggle for men's minds, religion has always been used by the vested interests. Religion, to start with, is nothing but

the fantastic reflection in men's minds of those external forces which dominate their daily life, a reflection in which terrestrial forces assume the form of supernatural forces. This aspect of religion is most evident in its original form in the Hindu scriptures, the *Vedas*. With the advance of time, social forces also begin to be active—forces which confront man as alien and at first equally inexplicable, dominating him with the same apparent natural necessity as the forces of nature. The fantastic figures which at first only reflected the mysterious forces of nature at this point acquire social attributes and become representatives of the forces of history. At a still further stage of evolution, all the natural and social attributes of the numerous gods are transformed to one Almighty God, who is but the reflection of the Abstract Man. Such was the origin of monotheism. In this convenient, handy and universally adaptable form, religion can continue to exist as the immediate, that is, the sentimental, form of men's relation to the alien natural and social forces which dominate them as long as men remain under the control of these forces.

Real knowledge of the forces of nature and society will dislodge the divine powers from the citadels of strength, and then religion and religious reflection will have no place in human life. But until then, religion, like all brands of idealism, will act as the hand-maid of the oppressing classes hindering the revolutionary action of the oppressed.

### *No Meeting Point*

Kishan Singh makes a mistake in trying to reconcile Marxism with the hostile concept of religion. He errs again when he examines the "confrontation of two religions, or two rival interpretations of the same religion"<sup>3</sup> from the point of view of the positive interests of the various classes, and passionately sympathizes with either of them. He refers to the Koran having a revolutionary content which vanished, according to him, when Islam conquered Iran and formed an empire.<sup>4</sup> To Kishan Singh, the conversion of Hindus to Islam at the early stage of the Muslim conquest of India was also a revolutionary act.

Equally, the heretical movement of Sufis against the established religion is called revolutionary; as also the spiritual strife of the Bhakti movement with *Brahmavad* during the Middle Ages. Kishan Singh finds the root cause of these oppositions in the outworn, rotten systems which were corrupted with 'maya', the incarnation of 'this-worldliness.' One must confess that all this has the appearance of a spiritual wrangling on purely subjective lines, and nothing more. But what has it to do with the revolutionary "guerilla warfare which the peasant-plebeians . . . were waging against the established order"?<sup>5</sup>

Following an identical line of thought, Kishan Singh discovers 'revolution' in the love story of Heer and Ranjha. He interprets *ishk* as "completely humanized sexual passion" which wafted the lovers to glorious heights. Love at first sight 'declassified' both the lover and the beloved! Ranjha is compared to a secular Gurmukh,<sup>6</sup> and Kishan Singh's

Gurmukh is a true revolutionary. *Ishk* is the spur which prompts the revolutionary Ranjha to spurn his ancestral land and the 'reactionary' love of his brothers and sisters-in-law.<sup>7</sup> *Ishk* again, does something to Heer. It repels her from maya-ridden men of property and status. In the words of Kishan Singh, "the real point in the battle of love, the crucial thing in the creation of Warris Shah, is the transformation brought about in the two lovers by their love."<sup>8</sup> Marxian thought is being enriched here with a strange transformation of qualitative nature!

### *Psychological Change*

Kishan Singh reveals to us that *ishk* emancipates humanity from all the evils of the established order. It liberates man in the first instance: this freedom leads to the brotherhood and ultimately to the love of mankind. How revolutionary! After adding a few quotations and references to men altering their material production and so forth along with the products of their thinking, we are supposed to take this revelation as Marxian too!

This pattern of thinking discloses the line of spiritualists who admit the reality of matter and material relations, but insist that social change can be brought about through the psychological transformation of man. There is one difference, of course. Here we have quotations from Marxist thinkers in support of the *a priori* unscientific assumptions.

All ideas and philosophical tendencies, without exception, have their roots in the material conditions and forces of production. This does not guarantee that all such ideas and tendencies will turn out to be revolutionary. For example, Marxism has never recognized religious or theological strifes as revolutionary. We know from experience that these make for reactionary diversion for the downtrodden from the real issues of life and struggle.

Class struggle, no doubt, is the key to all history. Individuals transforming themselves through subjective psychological incentives do not make or lead revolutions. As a means of liberation, there is no alternative to relentless struggle against the oppressing and exploiting classes and all that they stand for.

PRITAM SINGH GORAYA

<sup>1</sup> Kishan Singh, "Warris Shah, Punjabi Poet of Love and Liberation", *Social Scientist* Number 12, July 1973, p 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p 33.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p 34.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p 33.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p 31.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p 32.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p 39.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p 40.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p 32.

## NOTE

### *1974-75 Budget: Pauperizing the Poor*

IN presenting the Economic Survey, the Finance Minister looked back and found the economic situation during 1973-74 'far from satisfactory'; he also forecast 'strain and stress' for the year ahead. The most pressing problem facing the country, said the Minister, is control of the inflationary spiral and creation of an atmosphere conducive to greater investment. The survey boasted of an increase of food production by 10 per cent and the national income by 6 per cent in 1973-74: how empty this claim is evident in view of the unprecedented low level of production in the previous year with which comparisons were made. All the 'achievements' are far short of the plan targets. It is obvious that the Finance Minister's references to 'economic growth' have nothing to do with the welfare and prosperity of the masses. What is really happening today is that the prosperity of a small percentage of the population is being ensured and enhanced at the expense to new heights of the vast majority.

Introducing the budget last year the Finance Minister declared the aims of the budgetary policies as widening employment opportunity and curbing the inflationary spiral. The Economic Survey concedes non-attainment of both goals, a failure never before admitted by the government. Prices have risen by 26 per cent over the year and the trend shows no sign of a turn down. It is interesting to note that even with food production stepped up from 100 million tonnes in 1972-73 to 110 million tonnes in 1973-74, food grain prices are soaring.

Feeding the people was the government's problem of the year 1973-74. The policy they adopted was nationalization of wholesale trade in wheat and the result was most upsetting to the entire distribution system. Finally it led up to increase in the market and procurement prices of wheat and rice. The procurement target of 8 million tonnes of wheat remained on paper. The price was hiked up by Rs 20 per quintal and even then only 4.5 million tonnes of wheat were procured during 1973-74. The government policy of nationalization of wholesale trade thus helped the surplus farmers to reap a rich harvest of profits. As for rice procurement, the target fixed was 5 million tonnes, but till the end of January 1974 only 1.65 million tonnes could be collected. In coarse grains, out of a

target figure of 1.63 million tonnes, only 179,000 tonnes could be procured. It has become clear that without an effective procurement policy of marketable surplus and an efficient public distribution system the price situation of food grains will not improve; increase in production by itself is the wrong means to this end.

Industrial production during the year 1973, according to the latest figures available, seems to have stagnated if not declined. During the first three months of the year it was stagnant and thereafter declined by 1.3 per cent. There was a large-scale decline in the output of iron and steel, cotton, fertilizers, coal and so on. Steel output from the main integrated steel plants is not expected to be more than 4.5 million tonnes, as against the target of 5.4 million tonnes which was itself reduced from an earlier target of 7.89 million tonnes. Prices of all industrial goods maintained a steady increase during the current year. There was an increase of 7 per cent in chemicals, 10 per cent in machinery and 21 per cent in other manufactures.

Money supply with the public increased tremendously during the current year: its volume expanded from Rs 2868 crores in 1961 to Rs 10,098 crores in December 1973. Table I gives the trend of the money supply during the last few years.

1973-74 was one of the worst years. While presenting the last budget (for 1973-74) the government seemed to show awareness of the difficult economic situation but the budget proposals were not designed to meet it. The Government of India, as usual, followed the conventional types of tax measures in favour of the rich property-owning class. An analysis of the budget for the last few years will show that budgetary policies of the government are directed at achieving a substantial transfer of income from those who consume (largely the masses of consumers belonging to the middle and poorer sections of the population) to those who have the propensity and capacity to save and invest (largely landlords, rich farmers, big capitalists and profiteers).

The budget speeches of Finance Ministers, from time to time, have clarified the outlines of the tax policy of the Government of India. Though progressive tax policies have been consistently sacrificed at the altar of rapid economic development, it was not until the Second Five Year Plan that the Government deliberately followed a policy of widening and deepening the tax base. It marked the beginning of a double-edged attack, of indirect taxes and inflationary financing, on the middle and poorer sections of the population.

### *1974-75 Budget*

The budget for 1974-75 is nothing more than a collation of calculations based on the age-old policy of promoting the interests of the property-owning classes. It shows revenue receipts of Rs 5641 crores compared to Rs 5079 crores for 1973-74 and revenue expenditures amounting to Rs 5408 crores compared to Rs 4778 crores for 1973-74. Capital

TABLE I  
MONEY SUPPLY WITH THE PUBLIC

Year	Notes in circulation	Circulation of rupee coins	Circulation of small coins	Cash on hand with banks	Total (2 + 3 + 4 + 5)	Net demand deposits of banks	Other deposits with Reserve Bank	Total (7 + 8)	Grand Total (6 + 9)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1960-61	1,941,57	141,69	71,02	49,79	2,098,05	757,10	13,46	770,56	2,868,61
1965-66	2,823,19	183,82	105,47	76,09	3,034,28	1,478,38	16,72	1,495,10	4,529,39
1969-70	3,799,39	233,16	127,06	149,27	4,010,34	2,318,30	57,90	2,376,20	6,386,54
1970-71	4,168,60	247,17	137,25	169,71	4,383,32	2,712,82	43,83	2,756,65	7,139,97
1971-72	4,594,01	262,52	148,40	183,05	4,821,87	3,236,53	79,55	3,316,08	8,137,96
1972-73	5,210,28	290,18	165,66	223,51	5,442,61	3,917,70	51,36	3,969,06	9,411,68
December 1972	4,751,17	278,08	161,07	262,86	4,927,46	3,732,57	55,84	3,788,41	8,715,87
July 1973	5,535,51	305,08	165,67	249,52	5,756,74	4,045,54	43,76	4,089,30	9,846,04
August 1973	5,326,99	305,90	165,67	247,19	5,551,36	4,172,88	37,25	4,210,13	9,761,49
September 1973	5,375,37	305,27	165,67	247,98	5,598,32	4,152,21	44,75	4,196,96	9,795,28
October 1973	5,562,45	310,61	165,66	260,20	5,778,51	4,114,31	34,43	4,148,75	9,927,26
November 1973	5,546,97	310,59	165,66	266,39	5,756,83	4,170,78	39,96	4,210,74	9,967,57
December 1973	5,596,02	310,63	165,66	264,65	5,807,66	4,250,46	40,10	4,290,56	10,098,22

Source: Reserve Bank of India Bulletin, December 1973, p 2143.

receipts increased from Rs 2460 crores to Rs 3099 crores and capital expenditures from Rs 2848 to Rs 3457 crores. The overall deficit amounts to Rs 125 crores as against Rs 87 crores for 1973-74. To reduce the overall deficit to Rs 125 crores for 1974-75 from the revised estimate of 650 crores for the current year, the Finance Minister has done some masterly juggling with the figures. The deficit shown in the budget need not be taken seriously because the current year's experience shows that the budget estimate of the deficit has no relation with the revised estimate. The Finance Minister has not merely sought to improve the revenue surplus from Rs 148 crores to 238 crores but has also proposed to slash the capital deficit from Rs 798 crores to Rs 358 crores. This reduction is over 50 per cent. This statement of the Finance Minister is particularly dubious when we notice that the net borrowing budgeted for is Rs 498 crores with repayment of Rs 206 crores as against Rs 554 crores in the current year. The gross borrowing would be of the order of Rs 704 crores as against Rs 1206 crores in 1973-74 and Rs 880 crores budgeted. Taking these into account along with the overall economic trend it is certain that the deficit for 1974-75 will be much larger than what is shown in the budget. This sort of unrealistic estimating in the budget in the full knowledge that the real position will be different, is a gross violation of the democratic principles of budget presentation and parliamentary approval. The large budget deficit for the current year is, according to the Finance Minister, partly attributed to the recommendations of the Pay Commission and large scale food subsidies. A close look at the revised estimate of the budget reveals that interest payments, defence services, agriculture and allied services are the main items responsible for the increase.

This year's budget estimates give an additional taxation of Rs 212 crores. This increase is from union excise (Rs 191.97 crores) and customs (Rs 20.50 crores); so the additional revenue for the Centre this year will be raised from indirect taxes. In the field of direct taxes no effect is expected on tax revisions during the next financial year. In the financial year 1974-75 there will be a minor addition of Rs 14.5 crores as a result of these changes. At the same time reduction in the rates of income-tax according to the new proposals will result in a loss of Rs 60 crores in a full year and Rs 36 crores during the next financial year. The Finance Minister's most glaring concession to the richer classes is a heavy reduction of income-tax rate from 97.75 per cent to 77 per cent. For this heavy reduction, the Finance Minister finds justification in quoting the Wanchoo Committee's recommendations on direct taxes. According to the Committee, a high tax rate is the prime reason for large-scale evasion. The Finance Minister has taken this cue and reduced the tax rate assuming that a better collection of income-tax will yield greater results. The direct tax changes will cost the exchequer Rs 60 crores and it is assumed that the loss could be made up by more efficient tax administration. The effect of such a reduction in the tax rate will be the loss to the exchequer of a

substantial revenue and the increase of black money at a rate faster than the present. It is shocking that in the first year of the Fifth Plan which has set the 'removal of poverty' as a major objective, budget proposals have drastically cut down the marginal rates of personal income-tax. It is ridiculous to expect tax evaders to declare an income of Rs 1 lakh to reduce their tax liability to Rs 13,700 or Rs 10 lakhs for a tax relief of Rs 1,87,000. Tax evaders and dodgers will get away with it as long as the ruling party depends on the active backing of the black money operators.

Today the Indian economy provides the maximum opportunity for manufacturers and speculative traders to collect and amass superprofits. A slight increase in corporate taxation above 15 per cent is a little drop in the ocean. In fact the Finance Minister has not hesitated to grant further concessions to monopolists. In the last budget, concessions were given in the name of attracting industries to the backward regions, research and development and expansion of the export market. Another major inducement was to replace the development rebate by 20 per cent initial depreciation on plant and machinery purchased after May 31, 1974. In this budget, the Finance Minister has extended both developmental rebate and higher depreciation for industries which could not install their plant and machinery due to delay in deliveries. Obviously every industry having expansion or new investment could claim that there is delay in delivery of plant and machinery. As a result, most of them are in a position to enjoy the double benefit of developmental rebate and extended initial depreciation beyond May 31, 1974. It is generally observed that slackening of the pace of industrial development is due to non-availability of investment goods like steel, cement and power and shortage of raw materials. The immediate remedy for shortage of steel, cement and power lies in the utilization of installed capacities. Production of agricultural raw materials depend on proper relations of production in land, relative prices and good irrigational facilities. It is difficult to understand how the development rebates would help the shortages arising from irrational organization and mismanagement.

### *'Bold' Plan Investments*

The Finance Minister in his budget speech points out: "A significant step-up in the rate of investment is clearly an essential condition for the realization of named objectives of the Plan." For the first year of the Fifth Plan the total outlay will be of the order of Rs 4769 crores as against Rs 4364 crores in 1973-74. Out of this, the budget provision for an outlay of Rs 2966 crores is for the central sector which includes Rs 911 crores as assistance to states and union territories. The share of states for their plans has been fixed at Rs 2059 crores. The Fifth Plan envisages an outlay of Rs 37,000 crores in the public sector. As for the total outlay, the plan investment would have been much larger than what is now provided. It is hardly 13 per cent of the total. In fact in real terms, the rate of public investment will be lower than that of 1965-66.

TABLE II

## PUBLIC SECTOR PLAN OUTLAY AS A PERCENTAGE OF NATIONAL INCOME

Year	Plan outlay as percentage of national income
1960-61	8.1
1961-62	8.0
1962-63	9.3
1963-64	10.1
1964-65	9.9
1965-66	11.3
1966-67	9.1
1967-68	7.3
1968-69	8.4
1969-70	6.9
1970-71	7.7
1971-72	8.8
1972-73	10.0
1973-74	8.2

Source: *Report on Currency and Finance*, Reserve Bank of India, 1972-73.

The Finance Minister claimed that higher outlays for the core sectors like coal, cement, steel, power and railways have been provided. Plan outlay for social services and community development, normally starved of resources, in the current year would amount to Rs 352 crores. On the other hand, non-development expenditure has been skyrocketing over the last decade. For instance, police expenditure has been on the increase from Rs 1 crore in 1948-49 to Rs 169 crores in 1974-75. Defence expenditure has also registered a six-fold increase since 1962.

TABLE III

## CENTRAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE

(Rs crores)

Item	1960-61	1965-66	1969-70	1970-71	1971-72	1972-73	1973-74
Development expenditure	236	235	354	410	560	577	601
Non-developmental expenditure	542	1142	1960	2108	2701	2973	3201
Grants to state & union territories	48	324	588	612	891	986	881
Total	826	2001	2902	3130	4072	4536	4683

Source: *Report on Currency and Finance*, Reserve Bank of India, 1972-73.

### *Increasing Dependence on External Sources*

The Fourth Five Year Plan ended with increasing dependence on external aid on government and private accounts, although self-reliance was the major objective of the Plan. The Approach Document to the Fifth Plan also reaffirmed the same objective. In fact foreign aid, both gross and net, is mounting. The gross receipts from external sources increased from Rs 661.80 crores in 1973-74 to Rs 849.79 crores in the 1974-75 budget. Receipts, net of repayment, has also increased from Rs 470.27 crores to Rs 552.47 crores. At the existing rate of consumption of oil, India will have to spend over 42 per cent of her export earnings only for importing oil. The total requirement of diesel and kerosene put together will be about 9.5 million tonnes. To produce this, crude oil input must be of the order of 25 million tonnes. Assuming that internal production reaches 8 million tonnes, we still have to import 17 million tonnes which would cost about Rs 1100 crores at the current crude oil prices. In view of the oil crisis, the external aid requirement would be of a greater extent during 1974-75, than forecast in the budget.

### *Conclusion*

The budget proposals and the professed objectives of the Plan will not go together. First of all the budget seeks to help the rich while imposing severe penalties on the masses of poor and middle classes. Secondly, the budget places greater reliance on external assistance. Thirdly, there is no sign that the budget will promote either stability or growth of the economy. The budget was expected to relieve, to some extent, those sections of population which have suffered under the inflationary spiral. Over the years the share of wage-earners and middle-class employees in the national income has been declining. For instance, the share of wages and salaries in value added seems to have declined from 65 per cent in 1949 to 53.3 per cent in 1969. As for wages, the corresponding decline has been from 53.3 per cent to 34.9 per cent. At the same time, the index of profit has kept on rising remarkably in this year of economic crisis. According to a Reserve Bank of India study, the real income of the worker has declined from 30.8 per cent in 1965-66 to 29 per cent in 1970-71 while the share of property-owners has increased from 69.2 per cent to 71 per cent during the same period. The decline seems to have been very sharp over the last few years on account of unprecedented inflation. The increase in money wages and dearness allowances secured by the organized labour and middle-class employees could not fully neutralize the erosion in their real income. Checking the inflationary spiral is the immediate task, according to the Finance Minister, before the government. The very same government has imposed further burdens on the vulnerable sections of the population. The disappointing factor in the budget proposals is that the Finance Minister has not taken a single step to curb the inflationary spiral in the country. On the contrary, heavy doses of indirect taxes and the railway budget have given an additional push to inflation. The increase in the

passenger fares in the railway budget has been heavily loaded against the lower classes. The increase in the fares affecting the upper-class passengers will bring only less than Rs 1 crore, while the increase in the third-class passenger fare will raise an additional amount of 50 crores. The railway budget proposes to collect an additional Rs 190 crores. Of this, over 93 crores will be accounted for by increase in freight on goods traffic. There is a substantial increase in the freight of salt, mustard oil, sugar, coal, firewood, paper and aluminium utensils which enter into the day-to-day consumption of poor workers, peasants and middle classes. Besides, the increase in freight charges on steel, fertilizer, ores and raw cotton are bound to affect the cost of production in farms and factories and upset the family budgets of masses of consumers.

For the first time since independence a substantial increase in the burden of indirect taxes is accompanied by a considerable scaling down of the marginal rates of personal income. An interesting feature of the proposed reduction is that the rate of concession is nominal at the lower slabs and substantial at the higher slabs of income. A good part of the excise duties would be passed on to the poor and middle class consumers and the increase in postal rates would also fall mainly on the poor and middle classes of the population.

The interests of those who have been dominant in the land and in business have demanded that resources for capital formation should be mobilized by transferring income from the consuming masses to the owners of property partly through the operation of market finances and partly through the fiscal mechanism. Deficit financing and commodity taxation have been the major fiscal instruments through which income is being transferred from the masses of consumers to the saving classes. In general the budget has meant an additional burden of Rs 212 crores on the poor and middle classes while large-scale concessions are given to the rich. This budget is another example of the pauperization of the poor who are victimized by the wrong economic policies of the ruling class.

JACOB EAPEN

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Review Article*

### *A Soviet Academician on Industrial Development in India*

G K SHIROKOV, INDUSTRIALIZATION OF INDIA, Problems of the Third World Series, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1973, pp 326, Rs 4.60

WHAT characterizes this wide-ranging study by a Soviet economist is the tension between the *tendency* that emerges from the economic analysis, and the apologetic and absurd theoretical and political *conclusions*. The tendency that emerges from the analysis comes in the line of an earlier generation of pioneering Soviet studies of economic development in modern India by Reisner, Pavlov, Goldberg, Melman and other Soviet scholars. The formal conclusions are dictated by the ideological-political position of modern revisionism in relation to India.

This review will not attempt to summarize the very interesting empirical material presented in this book which must be evaluated in detail. It will merely take up the two aspects of the study and see how the conclusions and the tendency are irreconcilable.

#### *TENDENCY*

The tendency that emerges from Shirokov's painstaking and detailed economic analysis shows that the industrialization of India is backward, uneven and distorted; that the plans for industrialization and economic development have failed; that monopolies and big capital have grown at the expense of the people; that the dependence on foreign finance capital has been significant and has increased; and that the economic situation has worsened, and will continue to worsen, at a pace alarming for the rulers.

Shirokov's economic analysis, based on a wealth of primary and secondary economic material and on his own field investigation stresses the following aspects.

### 1. *Colonial Burden*

It is important to start, in a study of this type, with the historical burden of colonial rule and of an industrial and economic development marked, scarred, distorted and stunted by colonial and, later, imperialist oppression.

India was capitalistically the most developed of the colonial and dependent countries, but a characteristic feature of its economy was the overwhelming predominance of a backward agriculture, insufficiently and narrowly developed, and the dependence of the reproduction of fixed as well as working capital on the foreign market. Modern industry occupied a peculiar place on the system of social division of labour and the reproduction of capital. Colonial and landlord exploitation helped to retain the lower structures in the country's economy and, consequently, the traditional character of reproduction in the pre-capitalist structures. With reproduction being based here mainly on the output of the handicraft industries, a practically independent cycle of reproduction remained intact in a wide sphere of the economy of India.

The dragging of India into the international division of labour and the development of commodity-money and capitalist relations blurred this production cycle, and reduced its scale. But the lower structures were unable to utilize the modern means of production. The breakdown of the pre-capitalist reproduction and the introduction of the output of modern industry into these structures were, during the colonial period, confined largely to the marketing of consumer goods. For all its advantages, factory production, even upto the first few years of independence, played a very small role in the supply of consumer goods to the lower structures. Even as late as 1952-53, nearly half of the consumption in the rural areas was satisfied either by domestic production, or by direct exchange with craftsmen. The greater part of the cash income of the peasants was used for buying handicraft goods. Two parallel cycles of reproduction existed: the pre-capitalist in the lower structures, and the capitalist in the capitalist structures.

The production of consumer goods accounted for nearly 80 per cent of the total value of gross industrial production. The development of heavy industry was rudimentary. The total investment in the capitalist sector in 1951 is estimated at Rs 3700 crores. But the gross output value of heavy industry (excluding the cost of repair operations, the production of consumer durables and electric power) was only Rs 370 crores to Rs 380 crores—approximately equal to the annual deductions into the depreciation fund.

The reproduction of constant and variable capital, both in industry and in the entire capitalist sector, depended on foreign trade relations with the world market, particularly with the British market. This was a measure of the backwardness of industry in colonial India.

In the backward economy, modern industry was only loosely con-

nected with the rest of the economy. In the colonial period, isolated events such as the opening of new heavy industry enterprises and the development of indigenous industrial capitalism could not eradicate the basic weakness of Indian industry.

## 2. *Failure of Plans*

The Plans have failed in their objectives, and have failed to lay the basis for a balanced and rapid industrial development. State-capitalist measures, which have accelerated the rate of capitalist development and the transformation of the small-scale-commodity sector, have not been able to prevent the spontaneous manifestation of *the laws of capitalist development*, have not been able to lay the basis for a healthy industrial development, and have not been able to coordinate the different structures—the small commodity, the small capitalist, the big private capitalist and the big public capitalist structures in industry.

Shirokov's detailed analysis of the first three Plans points to the following important conclusions:

A. Industrialization during the Plans involved basic disproportions which distorted, damaged and severely retarded the process. An examination of the data on the average annual rates of growth of the different branches of modern industry during the first three Plans highlights the lagging of the mining industry behind the 'manufacturing' industry as a whole, and behind the power industry. Among 'manufacturing' industries, metallurgy was lagging behind engineering, the principal consumer of its output. The building and ancillary industries had a lower growth rate than the Group I industries (producing the means of production) as a whole. While the power industry developed at a rate greater than that of other industries, the establishment of intensive power-consuming enterprises such as the production of aluminium and soda, the shifting of many old enterprises from the steam engine to the electric motor, and the increasing demand for electricity in agriculture led to a permanent shortage of electricity in many regions. These disproportions raised the capital-intensity of industries, because the chronic shortage of producer goods prevented an effective utilization of the installed capacities.

B. The uneven development of related, mutually dependent, sectors kept industry in India chained to, and increased its dependence on the world market. The disparity between the supply and demand at any given moment meant that imports had to be resorted to for covering the gap, and since the goods imported were cheaper than what could be produced in India in this situation, imports acted as a brake on their production in India.

It is characteristic of this study by a Soviet economist that the striking indictment of planning in India stops with the Third Plan, that there is no study of the three-year 'Plan holiday' following the Third Plan, and that there is no review at all of the first three years of the Fourth Plan—all this in spite of the fact that Shirokov's book appeared in English

in 1973.

It is not the difficulty of obtaining up-to-date data on planning and industrialization, but the *clear intent of apologetic* that explains this failure to go beyond the Third Plan. It would be too much to expect from such an analysis a recognition that the three years of 'Plan holiday' showed that planning was virtually abandoned, or that the difficulty in formulating even a draft Fourth Plan reflected the plight of planning within a system that quickly brings all calculations of rapid industrialization to nought, or that the revised Fourth Plan (1969-74) was itself an outstanding example of the theoretical dogmas of the big bourgeoisie masquerading as 'pragmatic' approaches. It would be too much, indeed, to expect from a contemporary Soviet economist an openly critical attitude to the approaching Fifth Plan.

The Indian state's concept of industrialization provided for both Indian and foreign entrepreneurs retaining the ownership of the means of production. The public and private sectors in industry and in the economy as a whole were to be developed side by side: "but the existence of the two sectors was an obstacle in the way of a purposeful policy of industrialization. The rapid advance of private enterprise in a weak economy aggravated the difficulties and contradictions of the economic expansion in general and industrial development in particular." (p 61)

On the whole, Shirokov finds that the *state measures encouraged the development of capitalism in India*, although they left many branches of the economy unaffected. That the state sector has been used since independence to support and strengthen the big bourgeoisie; that in entering the various fields of industry and related activity, the state performs essentially the role of building the infrastructure and producing commodities needed for the growth of the private sector; that state institutions such as the Life Insurance Corporation, the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation, the Industrial Finance Corporation, the Industrial Development Bank of India and the National Industrial Development Corporation have been used to strengthen the big bourgeoisie; and that the nationalized banks and general insurance are being used in the same way—these are fundamental facts of the economy and of life which the author does not seriously contest.

Indeed, it comes as a surprise that Shirokov recognizes some of these facts and even offers an analysis of some of the main tendencies of the state sector: the dependence on foreign collaboration and foreign aid and the inefficiency, bureaucracy and corruption that plague it. Shirokov goes so far as to suggest that "the costs of setting up a powerful public sector industry are in the main shouldered by the mass of the population and this aggravates the economic and social conflicts" (p 140) and to add:

it was the monopolies that made most out of the entire complex of government measures. They strengthened their economic power and spread their political and economic influence over the country. The expansion of the monopolies in India prevented capitalism developing

from below. In the final analysis, such a situation held back the transformation of the economy on the basis of industrialization, and aggravated the social confrontation between the different classes and strata of Indian society. (p 149)

At any rate, in the analysis of Shirokov, *all this remains true upto 1969.*

### 3. *Collaboration with Foreign Finance Capital*

That Indian capital collaborates increasingly with foreign finance capital comes out very clearly from Shirokov's economic analysis, and from the data he uses. In the given socio-economic conditions in India, industrialization is "highly dependent on the world capitalist market and the foreign monopolists." (p 148) Apart from resulting in a disadvantageous division of labour between the indigenous and foreign producers, this situation has meant a growing demand for imports to support production, the urgent need to acquire production know-how and equipment at exorbitant costs to the economy, and a steadily rising export of profits, interest and royalties for the benefit of foreign monopolists. The collaboration agreements have been a powerful instrument opening the way to the penetration of foreign finance capital into Indian industry. The growing export of profits and payment for foreign technical collaboration at a time when the balance of payments has been in lasting deficit has drained India's reserves of foreign exchange. The conditions set down in the agreements have often obstructed the expansion of exports and the reduction of imports. The expansion of collaboration between the Indian and foreign firms has worsened the anarchy of capitalist production and led to new imbalances in industry. Increasing collaboration with foreign finance capital has also worsened another basic problem of industrialization in India: the problem of *incomplete production cycles*, which has ruled out any movement towards a basically self-reliant industrial development.

Shirokov's views on machinery and production technology in Indian industrialization are also worth serious attention. His analysis of the general characteristics of the technological level of industrial production in India highlights several specific weaknesses notably the backwardness of ferrous metallurgy and the backwardness of engineering. Between 1966 and 1968 Shirokov visited several engineering plants in India and found several weaknesses characteristic of industrial backwardness in India. First, the foundries were the least mechanized units. Secondly, the factories were usually furnished with universal metal-cutting machine tools. Specialized unit-built machine-tools, not to mention programme-controlled or automatic machine tools were rare. Thirdly, since there was no machine control of tolerance, the accent was placed on the technical control departments, control-and-measurement laboratories and so on. Fourthly, there were few mechanical aids for assembling and conveying raw material and parts from one process to another, and for transporting finished products to the storages.

In fact, the chapter entitled "Peculiarities of the Production Mechanism" provides by far the most interesting and useful material in the study. Here, the author examines the evidence on various specific aspects of industrialization in India: the poor specialization and the weak social division of labour, the natural resources, the skill of the labour force and its cost, the capacity of the home market and the nature of the home demand, the peculiarities of indigenous entrepreneurship, and the relationship with foreign finance capital. Shirokov also provides interesting original data on the *capital-intensity of production*, a generalized index of industrial activity in India. All this material must be evaluated in detail.

On the whole, the picture that emerges from his detailed economic analysis is the picture of capitalism in India as an unhealthy growth, which, in the striking characterization of Minhas, *was born with a grey beard and cannot move except on crutches*. Shirokov, for obvious reasons, does not draw the inevitable conclusion from his picture that *this dependent capitalism has no way out of the crisis*. He cannot acknowledge that what we see in India is a growing instability; that feudal and semi-feudal relations in the countryside distort and retard capitalist development in industry in a very vital way; that the various instruments of the 'anti-crisis' policy of capitalism in India stand no chance against the relentless attack of the third phase of the general crisis of world capitalism which brings among other phenomena the shrinking of markets, the drying up of foreign 'aid' and a sharpened monetary crisis; and, most important, that *the existing relations of production, and the state power, are irreconcilable with the industrial development of India*.

### CONCLUSIONS

For what they are worth, Shirokov's formal conclusions from his data may be presented thus:

#### 1. 'New Economic Policy' since 1969

The split in the Congress in 1969 somehow transformed the entire crisis of industrialization into a hopeful situation. In spite of all that has been said and done, the situation is not too bad, and there is a way out for the ruling classes and the Congress government.

For, whether he believes it or not, Shirokov must pretend that around 1969, some time after the Congress had split into a 'progressive' and a 'reactionary' camp, the government of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi launched a 'new economic policy' that led the way out of the economic crisis. Whereas he suggests that the policy of the Government of India boosted the economic might and political power of the monopolies upto 1969, he must write as if nothing was the same from the moment Morarji Desai, Kamaraj, Sanjiva Reddy and others were thrown out of the ruling Congress:

In the course of the struggle which lasted from 1967 to 1970 the monopolies suffered a setback. The biggest commercial banks and

insurance companies were nationalized, and foreign trade, the import of industrial raw materials in particular, was gradually taken over by the Government. These measures tend to reduce the capital accumulation of monopolies and their influence in the economy. (p 124)

Shirokov celebrates formally the 'three main aims' of the Congress's 'new series of reforms' : (a) consolidation of public sector in the economy by the nationalization of banks and some industrial enterprises, by establishing a government monopoly of the import of industrial raw material and by redistributing the national accumulation fund in favour of the public sector; (b) greater government support for small-scale capitalist entrepreneurship by ensuring a better supply of raw material, bigger credits, improvement of technical skills, and restrictions on monopolies and big capital; and (c) new agrarian reforms and the support of the 'green revolution' in the countryside.

Will these 'new reforms' succeed in removing the obstacles to industrial development in India? It must be noted that Shirokov concludes his enquiry with a question mark, does not clinch the issue, and even dares to note in the last paragraph of his book : "the new policy has not been stabilized in the political, social and economic spheres. It can only be noted that the planned measures introduce no radical changes in the general trend of the industrial revolution and the industrialization." (p 314)

## 2. *Crop Failures and War*

Faced with conclusive evidence on the failure of planned economic development in India, especially after the mid-sixties, Shirokov is inclined to ascribe it to natural crop failures and the conflict with Pakistan, while absolving the Government of India's policy of that part of the blame.

## 3. *Socialist Aid*

Shirokov makes the formal assumption that the Government of India's relations with the Soviet Union and the East European socialist countries and aid from them can redeem the situation, but this argument is not developed seriously.

## 4. *Class Character*

Shirokov divorces economic power from political power in India. While he does not commit himself in so many words to any characterization of state power in India, he does assume that the Congress and its allies, after 1969, have been engaged in a struggle against monopoly capital. He also assumes that landlords have no share in the state power. He sees the state as basically progressive, capable of shaking off the fetters of the 'lower structures' and of foreign finance capital.

## 5. *False Dichotomy*

Shirokov's analysis of industrialization ends in a wholly false dichotomy.

tomy, between the *ideology and purpose* of industrialization in India and its *mechanics* and unfolding. He refuses to draw in class terms the lesson of his story—the *bankruptcy of the capitalist path of development as revealed in the specific experience of industrialization in India*.

Modern revisionism has spared no attempt to twist the writings of Lenin and to distort the fundamental facts of the economy and life in India to make them yield grotesque theoretical and political conclusions favourable to the ruling classes and the regime of Indira Gandhi. Soviet academicians, including a few who once upon a time pioneered scientific research in the economic history of India are not above suspicion in coming so openly to the aid of modern revisionism. They have shown that the state in India has made tangible and progressive gains against imperialism and the monopolies; that planning in India, representing the 'overpowering desire' to break the grip of backwardness at any price, has borrowed to a considerable extent from the experience of economic planning in socialist countries; that the ruling Congress Party has created 'nationwide unity' on this essential aspect of economic policy; that the Government of India's intimate relations with the Soviet Union and the East European socialist countries have paved the way for a 'gradual growth of the anti-capitalist content', an 'even greater intolerance of capitalism' and 'socialist-oriented integration'; and that the 'non-capitalist path of development' (characterized by the deprivation of the monopoly of political power of the big bourgeoisie by the strengthening of the 'mixed economy' where the public sector plays an increasing and ultimately decisive role, and by 'subjective socialist' and 'non-Marxian socialist' trends) has opened the way to socialism.

In this climate, Shirokov must be judged not merely for what he writes, but for what he might have written, but does not. It is surprising, indeed, to find Academician Shirokov resisting in 1973 the temptation to palm off on his readers, in the manner of Academicians R Ulyanovsky and V Pavlov, the moral of the 'non-capitalist path of development'. Shirokov's is no Marxist-Leninist study, but the fact that the key incantation does not appear on a single page is one of the small mercies of this work of contemporary Soviet scholarship, for which we are grateful.

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State Character and Economic Policy □  
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SUDIPTO MUNDLE

## *State Character and Economic Policy*

SOCIAL scientists have been increasingly concerned with the problem of identifying the class character of the Indian state.<sup>1</sup> One way of looking at this problem is to analyse the impact of state policy on various socio-economic classes.<sup>2</sup> If the state apparatus can be viewed as a machine in the hands of a ruling class, or classes, which will use it to serve their own class interests as far as possible, subject to certain compromises which may be necessary to perpetuate their hold on state power, it follows that there will be a close correspondence between state policy (intervention in the economy) and the class character of the state. The present paper examines two aspects of this relationship. Both aspects are related to state intervention in the pattern of financing economic development.

### *Class Impact of Public Resource Deployment*

The basic instrument of state intervention in the deployment of resources is public investment or the financial operations of the state capitalist sector.<sup>3</sup> Before analysing the impact of these operations, however, it is necessary to remove a frequent misconception that the coming into existence of a large state sector, in itself, implies a weakening of the institution of private property or the propertied classes. It is well known that rapid industrialization and capitalist development in Meiji Japan was achieved through the leading role of the state sector.<sup>4</sup> Similarly the state

sector became predominant in the war economies of Europe without displacing the capitalist relations of production in these economies. In the contemporary world, a large share of the state in economic activity seems to have become a permanent feature of advanced capitalist systems. Tsuru<sup>5</sup> and Chattopadhyaya<sup>6</sup> have cited evidence to show that, in fact the share of the state in economic activity in the advanced capitalist economies of Europe and the USA is actually larger than in India. Evidently, the social character of state capitalism is to be understood not in terms of its size but, rather, in terms of the specific impact on different social classes.

In relation to the deployment of financial resources, the operations of the state sector may be grouped into two broad categories: physical 'public' investment and financial operations of the 'public' sector. Within physical public investment, one part consists of investment in infrastructure and social overheads while the other part consists of investment in the industrial sector itself. At one level, we might view them as class-neutral in the sense that they are beneficial to all classes and do not benefit one class at the cost of another. Creation of a modern system of power, communications and transportation; development of education, health and other welfare facilities and the growth of industry is naturally beneficial from the point of view of the people as a whole. But even at this level one might argue that the differences in wealth-income positions and social status severely limit the capacity of some classes to enjoy these benefits in either production or consumption, so that the distribution of benefits from physical public investment is highly skewed in favour of the upper wealth-income strata of our population.

This argument however is peripheral. The real function of physical public investment lies elsewhere. As Dasgupta<sup>7</sup> and others have pointed out, there was substantial accumulation already of usurer and merchant-capital in the hands of a nascent indigenous bourgeoisie during the colonial era. Communities prominent for the pre-capitalist forms of accumulation were the Marwaris of Rajasthan, the Chettys and Naidus in the South and the Parsees and Gujaratis in the West. Growth of industries however, was minimal and even among these, indigenous enterprise was restricted to a few small pockets, for example, cotton textiles in Bombay-Ahmedabad. One of the essential preconditions for the rapid transformation of this pre-capitalist accumulation into modern industrial capital in the post-colonial economy was the provision of certain physical or technological requirements for this transition, that is, modern systems of communication, power & transportation; urban development, training and education of skilled manpower, and finally the quick development of a few basic industries.

The rapid creation of this material basis for India's industrial revolution, however, could not have been easily achieved by private capital for at least three reasons: (a) the type of investment required would involve the tying up of large amounts of capital over a long gestation

period and pioneers' risk—a prospect not ideal for the private entrepreneur; (b) the investments would ultimately yield large benefits to particular industries or industrialization as a whole, but only a fraction of these would go back to the original investor, that is, investments with heavy externalities; (c) even though indigenous capital in the post-colonial era was to a certain degree concentrated, as we shall see later, private capitalist groups were far too small to undertake such heavy investment and large risks even if they had wanted to do so. These limitations on the individual capitalists became a material constraint for the development of the industrial capitalist class as a whole. 'The state alone could break this 'isolation paradox' and establish the material preconditions for the development of the industrial bourgeoisie through investment over a wide front in infrastructure, social overheads and basic industries.

Even a cursory reading of the public sector programmes of our five year plans, the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 and the expenditure programmes in the annual budgets will reveal that these are precisely the areas in which the Indian state has undertaken physical investment. It has established for the industrial capitalists the essential material pre-conditions for their development. This is why, as so many authors have pointed out, a large state sector was recognized as an instrument of support, not opposition, by the Indian capitalist class and private capitalists were among the most enthusiastic champions of the state sector in the National Planning Committee of 1938, the Bombay Plan of 1944, the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1948 and so on.

TABLE I  
TOTAL, PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTOR INVESTMENTS

Period	Rs crores				
	(1) Total Investment	(2) Public Sector	(3) Percentage Share of (2) in (1)	(4) Private <sup>a</sup> Sector	(5) Percentage Share of (4) in (1)
First Plan (1951-56)	3360	1560	46.4	1,800	53.6
Second Plan (1956-61)	6831	3731	54.6	3,100	45.4
Third Plan <sup>b</sup> (1961-66)	10400	6300	60.6	4,100	39.4
Fourth Plan <sup>b</sup> (1969-74)	22635	13655	60.3	8,980	39.7
Fifth Plan <sup>b</sup> (1974-79)	47561	31400	66.0	16,161	34.0

Source: *Pocket Book of Information, 1971 and Draft Fifth Five Year Plan 1974-79* p 41.

a This excludes transfers from public to private sector.

b Targets.

TABLE II

RATES OF GROSS AND NET FIXED ASSET FORMATION OF GROUPS OF PUBLIC/  
PRIVATE LIMITED COMPANIES AND GOVERNMENT COMPANIES

(percent)

Capital Formation	Med. & Large Pub.Lim. Cos.	Large Pub. Lim. Cos.	Small Public Lim. Cos.	Med. & Large Pvt.Ltd. Cos.	Small Pvt. Ltd. Cos.	Govern- ment Cos.
Gross Fixed Asset Formation						
1966-67	10.5	11.5	8.6	9.8	9.1	11.8
1967-68	9.0	9.8	8.0	8.7	7.5	11.1
1968-69	7.6	9.3	8.3	6.6	9.6	8.5
1969-70	7.3	7.8	7.0	6.5	10.4	7.1
1970-71	6.8	7.0	5.8	6.9	—	6.3
1971-72	—	7.4	—	—	—	—
Net Fixed Asset Formation						
1966-67	9.0	9.7	8.7	7.3	6.2	8.5
1967-68	7.0	7.8	7.3	5.7	4.4	7.9
1968-69	5.0	5.6	7.8	3.1	7.2	4.7
1969-70	3.9	4.3	5.1	2.2	8.0	2.8
1970-71	2.7	2.6	3.2	3.4	—	2.3
1971-72	—	3.3	—	—	—	—

Source: *Report on Currency and Finance 1972-73*, Reserve Bank of India, p 197

NOTES (-) not available. Percentages based on assets at current prices.

It is sometimes argued that the foregoing interpretation might have been true at the beginning of the post-colonial era but that now, with the material base already created, the role of the state capitalist sector has changed. The state sector by virtue of its rapid expansion, it is argued, is depriving private industrial capital of a share of the market and thereby curbing its expansion, that is, the state capitalist sector is growing at the cost of the private capitalist sector. The evidence, as represented in Tables I to III speaks otherwise.

While public sector investment has been larger than that of the private sector since the First Plan (Table I), the relative shares of the two sectors seem to have stabilized at a ratio of 2:1 in favour of the public sector (Table I), with both sectors growing at about the same rate (Table II). In fact the assets of both sectors have been increasing at a decreasing rate (Table II) with a slight edge in favour of some categories of private sector companies. Corresponding to this flow of investment over time, the share of the private sector in capital stock has somewhat decreased (Table III) but it is still completely dominant, possessing about

75 per cent of the total capital stock (Table III). Moreover, the slight decrease in its share of the total capital stock has not made the slightest dent in its share of the market (Net Domestic Product or Net Value Added) which has remained stable at about 85 to 90 percent (Table III)<sup>8</sup>. The share of the private sector in gross profits is still higher while its share of profit after taxes actually seems to have increased at the cost of the public sector (Table III).

TABLE III  
RELATIVE SIZE OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR

		(percentage shares)		
		1960-61	1965-66	1968-69
Total Net Domestic Product	Public Sector	10.6	13.2	13.6
	Private Sector	89.4	86.8	86.4
Capital Employed	Public Sector	8.7	21.8	26.6
	Private Sector	91.3	78.2	73.4
Gross Fixed Assets	Public Sector	7.6	24.9	30.3
	Private Sector	92.4	75.1	73.4
Net Value Added	Public Sector	5.2	8.2	9.2
	Private Sector	94.8	91.8	90.8
Gross Profits	Public Sector	4.8	8.8	6.0
	Private Sector	95.2	91.2	94.0
Profit after Tax	Public Sector	5.8	5.0	12.9
	Private Sector	94.2	95.0	112.9

Source: *Pocket Book of Economic Information*, 1971 and *Economic Times*, December 14, 1971.

Evidently the growth of physical public investment has neither curbed the growth of private industrial capital nor cut into its market. On the contrary, in addition to creating the material preconditions for the growth of private capital, public investment has expanded the absolute size of the market by generating a whole new range of demands for intermediate and capital goods.

The second and more important aspect of state intervention in the deployment of financial resources is the role of the state sector vis-a-vis private manufacturing capital in the market for money capital. It turns out that the financial operations of the state sector, like its physical investments, are also directed towards establishing conditions conducive to the rapid growth of private industrial capital.

One dimension of this relationship is the lending operations of the nationalized banking sector. In 1970 the nationalized banks accounted for 85 per cent of all loans and advances from scheduled commercial banks as against 9 and 6 per cent accounted for by the foreign banks and private Indian banks respectively.<sup>9</sup> In other words, by 1970, there was a state monopoly in banking operations and overall trends of this sector were by

and large accounted for by the state sector banks. As on December 24, 1970, scheduled commercial banks had given advances upto Rs 2609.9 crores to industry of which 85 per cent was accounted for by the nationalized banks. These advances amounted to 63.5 per cent of total advances given to industry on the given date as against 17.3 per cent going to commercial operations, 3.6 per cent going to private financial operations, and about 7 per cent going to plantations and agriculture.<sup>10</sup> Evidently, the basic function of lending operations by the nationalized banking sector has been that of providing financial support to manufacturing capital.

The second important element of financial relations between the state sector and private industrial capital is the role of the term-lending institutions. These have been set up almost exclusively to support private sector industry. The growth of assistance disbursed by these institutions is reproduced in Table IV. It should be noted that their assistance goes almost entirely to private industry. In spite of claims about the growing support to the state sector or the cooperative sector, it turns out that such assistance only amounts to Rs 6.4 crores, Rs 10.5 crores and Rs 15.0 crores to the cooperative sector in 1969-70, 1970-71 and 1971-72 respectively and Rs 11.5 crores to public sector industry in 1972-73.<sup>11</sup>

The dependence of private industry on the state sector's financial support can be focussed more sharply in terms of what Ganguli<sup>12</sup> described as the gearing ratio. This is the ratio of resources raised externally to a firm's internal resources (profits, depreciation allowances etc.). Usually a rising ratio of borrowed to internal resources involves increasing risk. However, when the government is a significant lender, this increasing risk

TABLE IV

TRENDS IN FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BY TERM LENDING INSTITUTIONS<sup>a</sup>

Year (April-March)	Assistance Sanctioned <sup>b</sup>	Assistance Disbursed
1965-66	169.3	105.8
1966-67	122.0	125.6
1967-68	87.1	105.0
1968-69	132.3	85.8
1969-70	153.8	116.3
1970-71	225.7	146.7
1971-72	304.6	184.5
1972-73 <sup>c</sup>	309.3	200.6

Source: *Report on Currency and Finance 1972-73*, Reserve Bank of India, p 194.

a The institutions covered are IDBI, ICICI, IFCI, IRI, SFCs & SIDCs.

b Assistance comprises (i) for IDBI all assistance except subscriptions to shares & bonds of financial institutions to avoid double counting, (ii) refinancing of SFC's loans.

c Provisional.

does not obtain. Moreover, we are interested not so much on total external support as on support by the state. Consequently, we have estimated a variant of Ganguli's ratio which we shall call the state support ratio  $S$  where,

$$S = \frac{\text{State sector loans}}{\text{Total investment in private industry}}$$

$$\text{and } 0 \leq S < 1$$

$S$  has been calculated for the year 1970-71. It turns out that in this year private industry was dependent on state support for as much as 42 per cent of its resources.

TABLE V

## PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT &amp; STATE SUPPORT

1	Total capital raised less 20% intra sectoral transfer	= Rs	70 crores
2	Total borrowings from scheduled commercial banks	= Rs	240 crores
3	Of which 85% from nationalised banks amounts to	= Rs	204 crores
4	Loans from term lending institutions to the private manufacturing sector	= Rs	119.5 crores
5	Retained profits	= Rs	174.0 crores
6	Depreciation reserves	= Rs	380.0 crores

$$S = [(3) + (4)] \div [(1) + (2) + (4) + (5) + (6)] = 0.42$$

Source: (1), (2), (5) & (6) from *Report on Currency and Finance 1971-72*, Reserve Bank of India p 13; (4) from table IV and *Report on Currency and Finance 1972-73* Reserve Bank of India p 206; (3) based on assumption of 85 per cent share of nationalized banks indicated in Statistical Tables Relating to Banks in India Reserve Bank of India 1970, p 28.

Our analysis of state intervention in the deployment of financial resources, through the instrument of the state sector, reveals that the dominant feature of this intervention is the support given to the growth of private industrial capital. On the one hand large scale state investment in infrastructure, social overheads and basic industries established the material or technological preconditions, including the creation of a reserve of skilled labour, for the transformation from pre-capitalist forms of accumulation to the accumulation of private manufacturing capital. This service, moreover, was performed without curbing the growth of private industrial capital or cutting into its market. Rather, the size of the home market was also expanded. At the same time, the state sector's operations in the capital market, where it is now a monopolist, has also been geared to the growth of private industrial capital. Generous lending operations of the nationalized banks and term-lending institutions have

significantly released the financial constraint and thereby established a second important precondition for the growth of private industrial capital.<sup>13</sup>

It is necessary now to look more closely at the industrial bourgeoisie which is enjoying state support. As we saw above, there was already a substantial volume of money capital accumulated in trade and usury by the merchant and moneylending communities during the colonial period. This enabled the indigenous bourgeoisie to rapidly penetrate and gain strongholds within the colonial managing agency system after the emergence of the post-colonial economy. With this instrument, and the device of financial interlocking, a decision-making agent could exercise complete control over several companies in various industries in which the agent may not directly own controlling shares.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, though industry was not very developed at the origin of the post-colonial economy, indigenous capital itself started out at an advanced degree of concentration. Subsequently, the usual laws of concentration have continued to operate leading to a differentiation of the bourgeoisie. This tendency and the mechanics of the process have been widely investigated by Choudhury and Nigam,<sup>15</sup> Mahalanobis Committee Report,<sup>16</sup> Hazari,<sup>17</sup> Monopolies Commission Report,<sup>18</sup> Dutt Committee Report<sup>19</sup> and it is sufficient for our purpose to note that the industrial bourgeoisie in India is already highly differentiated. The question which concerns us here is whether the financial support of the state is evenly extended to all sections of this differentiated bourgeoisie or whether it is disproportionately concentrated in favour of certain categories.

On August 3, 1972 the Ministry of Finance released information in the Rajya Sabha on loans extended by the term lending institutions to concerns of the seventythree industrial houses listed in the Industrial Licensing Policy Enquiry Committee Report. According to this infor-

TABLE VI  
TERM LOANS TO MONOPOLIST CONCERNS

Disbursing Institution	Amounts loaned to concerns of the 73 houses (Rs crores)	Percentage share of total loans disbursed
Industrial Development Bank of India	63.85	53.3
Industrial Finance Corporation of India	77.83	30.2
The Life Insurance Corporation of India	17.54	66.03
The Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India	93.31	47.36

Source: *Mainstream*, September 30, 1972

mation, reprinted in Table VI, a very large share of total loans —ranging from 30 to as much as 66 per cent for different term lending institutions—has gone to concerns of these 73 monopoly houses.

Furthermore, Raza Ali<sup>20</sup> cited a study by the Economic Times of the Finances of 113 Large Companies which showed that up to 90 per cent of the financial requirement of these companies is being met from term loans borrowed from public sector financing institutions. This, compared to the average state support ratio of 42 per cent estimated earlier, confirms the evidence of Table VI that the financial operations of the state vis-a-vis private industrial capital, while supporting the industrial bourgeoisie as a whole, has been disproportionately concentrated in favour of the large industrial houses. The monopoly bourgeoisie or big capitalist class seems to have been specifically singled out for this financial support.

One final aspect of state intervention in the deployment of finances has to be noted. Together with the growth of industrial licences issued and especially licences issued to monopoly houses,<sup>21</sup> there has been an equally rapid increase in the number of approvals of foreign collaboration cases, the number of such cases having doubled between 1968 and 1972. However, this is not necessarily indicative of either the predominance or growth of comprador influence within the state. The nature of these agreements is quite different from the traditional relationship between comprador capital in a colony and the bourgeoisie of the metropolitan economy. Moreover the steep decline of foreign aid points in the opposite direction. In any case a more important indicator of comprador influence is the position of the foreign banking sector vis-a-vis the nationalized banks. Foreign banks invariably constitute the beach-heads and subsequently, the key levers for penetration of private foreign capital into the home market. However, as pointed out in Table VIII, their operations—measured by any index—are very limited, compared to the operations of the nationalized banking sector. Obviously, no firm conclusions can be derived from this evidence alone. Nevertheless it is indicative and seems to support the thesis that comprador class interests are no longer decisive in determining state policy.

TABLE VII

Year	Industrial licences issued	Licences issued to twenty largest houses	Foreign Collaboration cases approved
1968	222	—	124
1969	221	34	135
1970	363	20	183
1971	626	114	245
1972	563	—	257

Source: *Report on Currency and Finance 1972-1973*, Reserve Bank of India, p 195 for Cols. 1 & 3; Col. 2, data available for three years from Lok Sabha debates, cited in *Social Scientist*, No. 3

TABLE VIII

## RELATIVE SIZE OF SCHEDULED COMMERCIAL BANKS IN 1970

				(Rs lakhs)
	Paid up capital	Total deposits	Total investment	Loans and advances
1. Public sector banks	3951 (85.1)	524856 (84.7)	154732 (84.8)	317085 (85)
2. Other Indian banks	691 (14.9)	39740 (6.4)	11833 (6.5)	22458 (6)
3. Foreign banks	—	54833 (8.9)	15894 (8.7)	35640 (9)
TOTAL (Scheduled Banks)	4642	619429	182459	375183

Source: *Statistical Tables Relating to Banks in India* 1970, Reserve Bank of India, p 12-13.  
Figures in parenthesis denote percentage of column tables.

Thus, to the extent that we are able to draw inferences about dominating class interests within the state from the revealed pattern of state intervention in the deployment of resources, it would appear that state policy in this area has pursued the interest of the indigenous industrial bourgeoisie. Within this bourgeoisie, furthermore, it has especially pursued the interest of the big bourgeoisie rather than the rest of the national bourgeoisie.

### *State Role in Agricultural Surplus Mobilization*

One of the major determinants of the rate of industrialization is the availability of additional money capital—the investment fund—for expanding the total magnitude of constant and variable capital in the industrial sector. Where labour power is in excess supply and installed capacities are under-utilized, we might even say that the investment fund is a binding constraint. One part of this investment fund is the surplus (profits plus depreciation) generated in the industrial sector itself. The other part, which consists of resources raised outside the industrial sector, becomes important if the rate of industrialization is sought to be highpitched and greater than the rate which can be sustained by the industrial sector itself.

In India, as in other underdeveloped economies, it is this availability of investment resources outside the domestic industrial sector which constitutes the crucial determinant of the rate of industrial growth. As we saw in the last section, private sector gross profits, which amount to almost 95 per cent of total surplus generated in the industrial sector (Table III), accounts for only half of the total investment in private sector industry alone (Table V). When we add to this the investment requirement of public sector industry plus the large investments in

infrastructure and social overheads, which do not generate any surpluses of their own, the critical importance of mobilizing surpluses outside the domestic industrial sector is obvious. In this section we have discussed the role of the existing state in mobilizing such surpluses from the agricultural sector.

Indian agriculture can be characterized as being in the initial stages of transition from pre-capitalist to capitalist modes of exploitation. At the end of the colonial era there was not only independent peasant production and production by tenants, but also production for the market by large landowners using wage labour. However, neither the existence of landless labourers nor commercialization were manifestations of capitalist development. As Patnaik<sup>22</sup> has recently argued in a compelling thesis, the main impact of the British land settlements and the linking of India with the world capitalist system was to pauperize the ultimate producer through modes of exploitation which were essentially pre-capitalist. Subsequently, as we shall see below, the land reform measures of the 1950s, the so-called new strategy of technological improvements in agriculture in the 1960s and the increasing profitability of agriculture set in motion a process of transition of the peasant-cum-corvee system into a capitalist system. Naturally, the pace of this transition is uneven between regions and there is evidence<sup>23</sup> that semi-feudal relations are still predominant in some parts of the country. We are concerned, however, with the aggregative trend.

Conceptually we can identify two alternative approaches for mobilizing surpluses from this agrarian system for financing industrial growth. The first approach, which we might describe as the two-stage institutional transformation is that which was tried by the socialist state in Russia. In the first stage large estates would be levelled through legislation into small and middle peasant farms. Subsequently, through the instruments of compulsory levies cooperatives and ultimately collectivization, agricultural production and the surplus of that production would be brought directly under control of the state for deployment towards industrialization. The second stage of this institutional transition is crucial. Without this a mere levelling down of large estates into small farms might even reduce the size of the surplus as it did in Russia<sup>24</sup>

In India, however, the landed<sup>25</sup> interests in agriculture are far too powerful to permit even the levelling exercise of the first stage. This was proved by the land ceilings episode of 1972. It will be recalled that the legislation on land ceilings, which would have approximated the first stage of the strategy outlined above, was aborted by the pressure of the landed classes, thus underscoring the power of these classes within the state.

The other approach for mobilizing surpluses from an agrarian system which is in transition to capitalism is to promote further capitalist development and manipulate the transfer of the surplus from agriculture

through policy instruments available within the bourgeois institutional framework. This was the strategy through which the Meiji state in pre-war Japan achieved successfully the same objective of mobilizing the agricultural surplus which the Soviet Union achieved through institutional change.

The overall policy framework of the Indian state towards the agricultural sector has also been that of promoting the development of capitalism. But this has not been accompanied by policies directed at mobilization of the agricultural surplus.

The land reform of the 1950s was the first major attempt at establishing institutional preconditions for the development of capitalism in agriculture, in the sense that it sought the elimination of feudal relations in agriculture. Though only partially successful, these reforms did lead to the emergence of a rich peasant class from among the bigger tenants who were able to buy ownership rights to their land. At the same time the reform was instrumental in converting a section of the absentee landlords into Junker capitalists.<sup>20</sup>

The subsequent shift in policy emphasis towards the promotion of scientific agricultural practices, the use of better seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, irrigation and mechanized agriculture was similarly aimed at establishing the technological preconditions of modern capitalist agriculture. Finally, the state backed these policies by making available increasing amounts of institutional finance, thereby establishing the third important precondition of capitalist agriculture. As indicated in Table IX, institutional finance to the agricultural sector has been growing rapidly and almost doubled itself during the last five years.

The promotion of capitalist development, however, has not been accompanied by any policy measures to either absorb the growing agricultural surplus for public sector investment, in the non-agricultural sector, or channelize this surplus into the hands of the industrial bourgeoisie.

One instrument for achieving such a transfer is institutional finance. By attracting more deposits into the state-controlled agencies from the agricultural sector than what is advanced to this sector, institutional finance would draw money capital out of the agricultural sector. Though complete data is not available on deposits raised from this sector it is reasonable to expect that these deposits do not amount to much more than the rapidly growing volume of institutional assistance to the agricultural sector. The figures quoted in Table IX incidentally, are only a fraction of total assistance since *taccavi* loans have not been counted.

Two more instruments which have been available for channelizing the agricultural surplus into industry is fiscal policy and the inter-sectoral terms of trade. By drawing away a net surplus in revenue, the state can itself absorb part of the surplus. Alternatively, by intervening in the commodity market—statutorily fixing prices supported by rationing and

state trading the state can shift the terms of trade between agriculture and industry in favour of industry and thus bring about a net flow of agricultural surplus into the hands of the industrial bourgeoisie.

However, the existing empirical evidence suggests that these instruments have been used by the state to feed money capital into the agricultural sector rather than transfer the surplus out of this sector. A study by Ishikawa revealed that during the first decade of planned development in the 1950s there was a net transfer of resources from the non-agricultural to the agricultural sector.<sup>27</sup> A subsequent study by Thamarajakshi indicated that the terms-of-trade continued to move in favour of agriculture upto the middle of the 1960s.<sup>28</sup> Mitra has argued that this movement, which still persists is in fact backed up by pricing policies followed by the state.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, it is well known that the fiscal instrument has also served to transfer resources into agriculture.

TABLE IX  
INSTITUTIONAL FINANCE FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71	1971-72	1972-73
I. Direct Finance					
A. Short Term					
(i) Primary agriculture <sup>a</sup>					
credit societies	456.39	487.77	514.90	521.09	610.42
(ii) Scheduled commercial Banks	—	—	—	107.30	131.36
B. Medium/Long Term					
(i) Cooperative banks <sup>b</sup>					
Credit societies	47.48	52.34	57.93	73.18	79.33
(ii) Scheduled commercial banks & Agricultural finance Corp.	55.10	200.29	252.37	174.91	200.19
(iii) Land development banks	148.15	155.48	170.36	177.77	190.00
II. Indirect Finance					
(i) Scheduled commercial banks, outstanding loans	134.81	157.79	146.12	172.27	174.96
(ii) Total term loans disbursed by rural electrification corporations	—	—	26.09	36.81	49.31
Total (Institutional Finance)	841.93	1053.67	1167.77	1263.33	1435.57

Source: *Report on Currency and Finance 1972-1973* p 123 Reserve Bank of India.

a. Data for taccavi loans disbursed by government are not available.

b. This is net of loans from scheduled commercial banks routed through these agencies.

Studies have shown that the sectoral inequality of tax burden was actually increasing in favour of agriculture during the sixties.<sup>30</sup>

The incapacity of the state to mop up resources from the agricultural sector was lately demonstrated by the fate of the Raj Committee Report on Taxation of Agricultural Income and Wealth.<sup>31</sup>

The principal recommendation of the report was on Agricultural Holdings Tax, similar to the land tax in Meiji Japan, which could have yielded upto Rs 200 crores according to the report. Yet, as Raj himself has pointed out, subsequent budgets have had no place for this tax. Unlike the Land Tax Revision Act and the British land settlements in colonial India the Agricultural Holdings Tax was not appropriately designed to protect the property-owning classes in agriculture. Consequently, it has been successfully shelved.

In the foregoing outline of state policy vis-a-vis agricultural development and mobilization of the agricultural surplus, two features stand out predominantly. Even though transferring the agricultural surplus to industry would have made possible a higher rate of accumulation of private industrial capital, the state has been constrained to compromise the interest of the industrial bourgeoisie in transferring money capital into the agricultural sector rather than out of it. Evidently the landed classes as a whole are a sufficiently powerful segment of the ruling class alliance to defend their interests vis-a-vis the industrial bourgeoisie in the mediation of the state. Moreover, the consistent state intervention towards the development of capitalism in agriculture suggests that within the landed segment of the ruling partnership, the agricultural capitalists, that is, the rich peasant and the Junker capitalist have become progressively more powerful at the cost of the precapitalist landlord class.

### CONCLUSION

Combining the relationships between state character and state policy as revealed by our analysis of the two sets of economic policies, that is, the deployment of public investments and the role of state towards mobilizing the agricultural surplus, it is possible to arrive at several inferences about the class character of the Indian state.

The fact that physical public investment and financial operations of the state sector have been geared principally towards promoting the accumulation of private industrial capital suggests that the indigenous industrial bourgeoisie is the dominant partner of the ruling class alliance. Moreover, it is not the industrial bourgeoisie as a whole which is dominant, but only one section of the bourgeoisie: the big bourgeoisie, which has cornered the greater part of state financial support for itself.

However, this indigenous industrial bourgeoisie, led by the big bourgeoisie, does not hold state power exclusively. The other partners of the ruling alliance, the landed classes as a whole, also constitute a powerful segment of the partnership. The agricultural propertied classes are

sufficiently powerful to ensure that the industrial bourgeoisie do not manipulate state policy at their cost. In fact our analysis reveals that the industrial bourgeoisie has substantially compromised its own class interest in allowing state policy to divert money capital into the agricultural sector than out of it.

Finally, all the landed classes are not equally powerful. The persistent thrust of state policy towards promoting the development of capitalism in agriculture suggests that the rich peasants and Junker capitalists have become progressively more powerful at the cost of the pre-capitalist landlord class.

One important consequence of this balance of power between the ruling, propertied classes which presently obtains is that the state is compelled to depend on sources other than the surplus value appropriated in either industry or agriculture for mobilising investible resources. There are mainly two such alternative sources, both of which the state has relied on heavily upto the present.

The first option is to squeeze real savings domestically through deficit finance. Throughout the period of post-colonial development the state has relied on deficit financing which has led to a rise in the general level of prices. This, in turn, has resulted in a transfer of real incomes from the salaried or wage-earning classes to the state and the profit earning classes.

It should be noted that the salaried or wage-earning classes who are adversely affected by the strategy of raising resources are the working class and the 'middle class', described by Raj.<sup>82</sup> These, again, are the classes most unfavourably affected by the kind of commodity taxation which has served as the major fiscal instrument of raising public resources. These policies of the state, evidently, are not consistent with the Kalecki thesis recently revived by Raj that the 'middle class' holds decisive control over the organs of state power.<sup>83</sup>

The reliance on inflationary finance has become particularly acute during the past few years, increasing in direct proportion to the decrease in foreign aid. Foreign aid, the other alternative referred to earlier, has gradually tapered off since the latter half of the sixties, thereby forcing the state to rely increasingly on deficit budgets. However, there is an absolute ceiling beyond which the working class and the 'middle class' can no longer absorb 'forced savings'. The economy seems to have approached this ceiling, as political trends over the past year seem to indicate, and already there is evidence that the state is preparing to shift back to the earlier strategy of 'aid-based' development with all its attendant consequences.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H Alavi, "The State in Post-colonial Societies", *New Left Review* 74, July-August, 1972; K N Raj, "Direct Taxation in Agriculture" *Mains-*

*stream*, March 1973; Conclusions of All India Conference on "Character of State Power", *Social Scientist*, August, 1973; S Naqvi, "Class Character of State Power in India", *Social Scientist*, August 1973; K Menon "Class Character of State Power in India", *Social Scientist*, October 1973; E M S Namboodiripad, "On Intermediate Regimes", *Economic and Political Weekly*, VIII, 48, December 5, 1973.

- <sup>2</sup> Another way of looking at the same problem is to start by analysing the mode of production. These two approaches are not in conflict but rather complementary to each other, each approach enabling us to understand the total picture.
- <sup>3</sup> Fiscal measures such as taxes, rebates and subsidies or direct controls such as licensing, rationing etc., have of course, been widely used, together with statutory regulation of prices. However, the ineffectiveness and irrational mix of these policies (See. J Bhagwati and P Desai, *India, Planning for Industrialization*, Oxford University Press, London 1970), makes it impossible to identify any clear direction in, or impact of, these policies.
- <sup>4</sup> W W Lockwood, *The Economic Development of Japan*, Princeton University Press, 1954.
- <sup>5</sup> S Tsuru (Ed) *Has Capitalism Changed?*, Tokyo 1961.
- <sup>6</sup> P Chattopadhyaya "Aspects of the Growth of State Capitalism in India", K Mathew Kurian (Ed), *Alternate Policies for the Fourth Plan*, Trivandrum, 1969.
- <sup>7</sup> R Das Gupta, *Problems of Economic Transition: Indian Case Study*, National Publishers, Calcutta 1970.
- <sup>8</sup> This discrepancy between shares of capital stock and share of the market is probably explained by a bias in the capital stock figures, which include, in the share of public sector, transfers from public to the private sector.
- <sup>9</sup> Reserve Bank of India, *Statistical Tables Relating to Banks in India*, 1970 p 12-13.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p 28.
- <sup>11</sup> Reserve Bank of India, *Report on Currency and Finance*, 1972-73, p 206.
- <sup>12</sup> S Ganguli, "Public Sector and Private Sector; Dynamics of the System," *Alternate Policies for the Fourth Five Year Plan*, K. Mathew Kurian (Ed), Trivandrum 1969.
- <sup>13</sup> Another important precondition for the expansion of private industrial capital is the creation of a reserve army of industrial labour. Such an army is usually created through the release of a surplus agricultural labour force when capitalism develops in that sector. The role of the state in promoting development of capitalism in agriculture has been discussed.
- <sup>14</sup> R K Hazari, *The Structure of the Corporate Private Sector*, Planning Commission, Government of India, New Delhi 1966.
- <sup>15</sup> N C Choudhury and R K Nigam, *The Corporate Sector in India*, Department of Company Law Administration, Government of India, New Delhi 1961.
- <sup>16</sup> Government of India, *Report of the Committee on Distribution of Income and Levels of Living*, New Delhi 1964.
- <sup>17</sup> R K Hazari, *op. cit.*
- <sup>18</sup> Government of India, *Report of the Monopolies Enquiry Commission*, New Delhi 1965.
- <sup>19</sup> Report of the Industrial Licensing Policy Enquiry Committee New Delhi, 1969.

20. R Ali, "Some Questions of Direction of Economic Development" *Mainstream*, December 2, 1972.
21. R K Hazari, *Industrial Planning and Licensing Policy, Final Report*, Planning Commission, Government of India, New Delhi 1967.
22. Utsa Patnaik, "Development of Capitalism in Agriculture," *Social Scientist*, August 1972.
23. A Bhaduri, "A Study in Agricultural Backwardness under Semifeudalism", *Economic Journal*, March 1973.
24. Maurice Dobb, *Soviet Economic Development since 1917*, New York 1966.
25. The phrase 'landed interests' and 'propertied classes' in agriculture has been used interchangeably to denote that subset of the agricultural landowning population which appropriates surplus value through one or another mode of exploitation.
26. For studies of the character of this land reform, see Bettelheim, *India Independent*, Monthly Review Press, New York 1968; D Thorner, *The Agrarian Prospect in India*, Delhi 1956; Das Gupta, *op. cit.* For a survey of the literature, see P C Joshi, *A Survey of Research on Land Reforms* (mimeographed), Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi 1971.
27. Ishikawa, *Economic Development in Asian Perspective*, Tokyo, 1967.
28. Thamarajakshi, "Intersectoral Terms of Trade and the Marketed Surplus of Agricultural Produce," *Economic & Political Weekly*, June 23, 1969.
29. A Mitra, "Towards an Indian Scissors Crisis—a Tentative Hypothesis" (mimeographed), seminar on *Political Economy of Agriculture*, Calcutta, 1973.
30. Y Alagh, "Case for an Agricultural Income Tax," *Economic and Political Weekly* III, 7, February 7, 1968; P K Bardhan, "Agriculture Inadequately Taxed," *Economic Weekly*, XIII, 39, September 30, 1961; AM Khusro, "Taxation of Agricultural Land—a Proposal," *Economic Weekly* XV, 4—6, February 1963; A Mitra, "Tax Burden for Indian Agriculture," *Administration and Economic Development in India* Spengler (ed) Duke University Press, 1963; V Gandhi, *Some Aspects of India's Tax Structure*, Vora, Bombay, 1970.
31. K N Raj, *op. cit.*
32. K N Raj, "The Politics and Economics of 'Intermediate Regimes'," *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 7, 1973.
33. E M S Namboodiripad, "On Intermediate Regimes," *Economic and Political Weekly* VIII. 48 December 1, 1973.
34. This question has not been pursued further since there is already a large volume of literature devoted to this issue—A K Bagchi, "Aid Models and Inflows of Foreign Aid," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual Number, January, 1970; "Theory of Efficient Neo Colonialism," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special Number, July 1971; Bettelheim, *op. cit.*; NK Chandra, "Western Imperialism and India Today—I&II," 1973 and February 17, 1973; M Kidron *Foreign Investments in India*, Oxford University Press, London, 1965; KM Kurien, *Impact of Foreign Capital in India*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1966; K N Raj, "Profits on Foreign Capital in India," *Economic Weekly*, February 12, 1955.

DILBAGH SINGH

## *The Role of the Mahajans in the Rural Economy in Eastern Rajasthan During the 18th Century*

THE large numbers of documents available at the Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner, enable us to form a clearer idea of the position and rights of different classes in the rural society. The purpose of the present paper is to analyse the position of the *mahajans* who may be called the section which provided money capital to the rural community.

### *The Professional Moneylenders*

In Eastern Rajasthan, the *mahajans* were popularly known as *bohra*—signifying money lenders and traders. The profession of *mahajans* was not a monopoly of the bania caste; as a profession, money lending was adopted by many different castes. In many instances we find the Brahmans working as *bohras*<sup>1</sup> and apart from lending money on interest, also furnishing *malzamini* (surety) on behalf of the *ijaradars*.<sup>2</sup>

Among the rural rich, the *zamindars*, *patels*, *mahajans*, etc., the *mahajans* occupied an important position because the peasants, the state and other rural dignitaries depended upon the monetary support of the *mahajans* to meet their financial requirements.<sup>3</sup> The *mahajans* as an occupational financier class usually concentrated themselves in particular villages, especially in the qasbas, in the villages, in the neighbourhood of towns and in the rural trade centres<sup>4</sup> (mandis). In this way they could support each other in case of need. It also implied that the villages were often grouped together for the services of the *mahajans*.

*Pattern of Investment: Usury*

The documents throw ample light on the pattern of investment in the rural sector by the *mahajans*. The peasants borrowed money on a number of accounts,<sup>5</sup> a major factor was the need for subsistence at the time of natural calamities such as famine, drought, etc.<sup>6</sup> Not only in abnormal years but also in normal years the peasants looked to the support of the *mahajan* for their agricultural requirements.<sup>7</sup> Even the agricultural loans known as *tagai*, advanced by the state to the *ryot* were borrowed from the *mahajans*, and the state stood surety for the payment of these loans with interest to the *mahajans*.<sup>8</sup>

For instance in the year of VS 1817/1760 AD we find the *darbar* borrowing Rs 4,000 from the *bohra* and advancing it to the *ryots* of pargana Bahutri in order to rehabilitate old deserted villages of the pargana. The *Amil* was instructed to realize this amount from the *ryots* with interest at the time of harvest and pay it to the *mahajan*.<sup>9</sup> In another case we find the *darbar* borrowing Rs 20,000 from the *bohra* and advancing it to the *ryots* of pargana Lalsot at the time of famine and scarcity in order to encourage them to settle in the deserted villages. The *Amils* were instructed to be responsible for the return of the money at the time of the next harvest.<sup>10</sup> In another instance in the year of VS 1814/1757 AD we find that the *darbar* borrowed Rs 7,000, from the *bohra* and distributed the amount to the *ryots* of pargana Chatsu at the time of scarcity. The *ryots* were induced not to desert the villages.<sup>11</sup> In another case we find the *darbar* borrowing money from the *bohra* and advancing it to the *ryots* of 28 Parganas, including Swai Jaipur, Khohri, Gaji ka Thana, Narnaul, Tonk, and Bahutri. The *bohra* was granted a *parwana* empowering him to collect the amount with interest at the time of next harvest.<sup>12</sup>

These loans were availed of by different classes of the rural society for multifarious purposes. The *zamindars* and *patels* required these loans for the settlement of new villages or to provide necessary facilities for rehabilitating old, ruined and deserted villages, for the expansion and improvement of agriculture, for digging wells and for construction of ponds.<sup>13</sup> The peasants utilized *tagai* to extend their holdings, to replace or purchase cattle and to buy manure, seeds and ploughs.<sup>14</sup>

The peasants' need for agricultural loans was fulfilled by two agencies, the state and the *mahajan*. As mentioned before, even the state while advancing the *tagai* to the peasants often borrowed the money from the *mahajans*.<sup>15</sup> Out of 13 instances of advancing *tagai* to the *ryot*, in 11 cases the state borrowed money from the *bohra*. In the following instances of advancing *tagai* to the *ryot* the money was borrowed from the *bohra* by the *amils*, pargana Bahutri in the year of VS 1817/1760 AD, pargana Lalsot in the year of VS 1811/1754 AD, and VS 1815/1758 AD, pargana Chatsu in the year of VS 1812/1755 AD, VS 1814/1757 AD and VS 1815/1759 AD, pargana Swai Jaipur, Khohri, Gaji ka Thana, Narnaul, Gaori, Tonk, Toda and Bhim, in the year of VS 1817/1760 AD, pargana Malarana

in the year of VS 1812/1755 AD, pargana Narayana in the year of VS 1817/1760 AD, pargana Gaji ka Thana in the year of VS 1796/1739 AD, and pargana Pinayan in the year of 1817/1760 AD. The *darbar* granted *tagai* out of its own resources, an amount of Rs 10,000 to the *ryots* of pargana Gaji ka Thana in the year of VS 1797/1740 AD and the *ryots* of pargana Chatsu in the year of VS 1810/1753 AD.

The peasants could also obtain a loan from the *mahajan* either against the mortgage of their property<sup>16</sup> or against *malzamini* (surety) furnished by the village *zamindar*, *patel* or *jagirdar*.<sup>17</sup> The individual peasant frequently fell into debt; and some of them pawned every thing to the *mahajan*. Thus we find Khiwa Jat of the village of Choru in pargana Fagi borrowing seed, bullocks and plough from Jassa Harji Patni, the *mahajan* of the village.<sup>18</sup> The extent to which the peasants were in debt will have to be worked out carefully.

In many cases the peasant indebtedness was collective and we find the entire *ryots* of villages borrowing money from the *bohra* to purchase seeds, manure, ploughs and bullocks so that they could cultivate the fallow lands of the village,<sup>19</sup> construct ponds and dig wells. Thus we find the *ryots* of qasba Mauzabad, borrowing money from the *bohra* to dig wells and to purchase seed and manure in order to cultivate the fallow lands.<sup>20</sup> Whenever collective loans were taken by the community, the surety was furnished by the *zamindar* or *patel* of the village.<sup>21</sup> The responsibility for the payment of such loans rested with the entire village community. The *ryots* had to pay the debt at the time of next harvest with interest usually through their traditional representatives, the *zamindar* or the *patel*.<sup>22</sup> We find examples where the revenue payers (*asamis*) of an entire pargana were in debt to the *bohra*. Thus we find the *asamis* of pargana Sharpur indebted to *bohra* Udaichand who lodged a complaint to the *darbar* that his debt was still unpaid. He sought the help of the *darbar* for the realisation of his loan.<sup>23</sup> The *mahajan* used to impose heavy *talab* upon the *ryots* if the latter failed to return his money in time. In one case we find the *mahajan* demanding *talab* from all the *ryots* at the rate of Re 0.50 per day.<sup>24</sup>

The village community could also lend money. In one case we find the entire *ryots* of the village of Mundawari in pargana Malarna functioning as money lender, thus advancing a loan on interest to Fateh Sing Harah, the *jagirdar* of the village, who needed money to pay off the state dues.<sup>25</sup>

### *Hiring out of Means of Production*

Apart from giving loans to the state, the *zamindars* and cultivators, the *mahajan* also loaned his bullocks, ploughs, seed and manure to the needy cultivators. Thus we find the *patel* and *ryots* of qasba Mauzabad borrowing bullocks, ploughs and seed from the *bohra*.<sup>26</sup> In another instance we find the *bohra* lending seed and manure to the *paltis*<sup>27</sup> of the village of Sitarampur in pargana Fagi.<sup>28</sup> The *mahajans* provided such loans to the

peasants on various conditions. Occasionally they rented out their ploughs and bullocks<sup>29</sup> and charged interest on lending seed and manure after commutating their price in cash.<sup>30</sup> The indigent peasants, usually the *paltis* and a category of *pahis* were wholly dependent on the *mahajan* for the resources needed for cultivation.<sup>31</sup> The rate of interest charged by the *mahajans* on the assets loaned was as high as the interest on money, ranging from 10 per cent to 25 percent.<sup>32</sup> However, the documents do not provide any information as to what was the incidence of rent charged by the *mahajan* on hiring out agricultural implements, that is, bullocks and ploughs.

The *mahajans* who provided these assets on credit were highly reputed in the village community. This fact can be best highlighted by an instance in which we find the entire village community turning against the village *zamindar* for his harassment of the *mahajan* who was engaged in *gharu kasht* and also provided the ryots with seed and manure on credit. The *zamindar* was warned by the state official not to harass the *mahajan*.<sup>33</sup>

### *Acquisition of Land*

Apart from investing money in usury, these *mahajans* also used their capital to acquire landed property both for *gharu kashta* and for share-cropping.<sup>34</sup> The *mahajans* occasionally took advantage of the weak economic condition of the peasants at the time of natural calamities when the latter had to borrow money or grain from the *mahajans* for their subsistence. The *mahajans* either purchased the land of the cultivators outright or lent money on mortgage of their lands.<sup>35</sup> The extent to which the *mahajans* acquired agricultural land by this manner can be seen by the fact that in the year of VS 1820/1763 AD, it was reported to the *darbar* that in qasba Chatsu out of 350 fields belonging to the *ryots* 175 had been purchased by or mortgaged to the *mahajan* at the time of scarcity due to famine.<sup>36</sup> They endeavoured to convert the lands of the *ryots* into their own *khudkashta* holdings, but the state officials were specifically instructed not to permit this, since it would mean loss of revenue to the state as the former cultivators were being charged concessional rate of land revenue on their *gharu kasht*.<sup>37</sup>

It may be noted that very often the *mahajans* themselves were involved in agricultural operations. In the majority of cases, they held *gharu kashta* and invested capital for the cultivation of cash crops.<sup>38</sup> They had the resources to develop their own means of irrigation, and utilize high quality seed and manure to get better returns.<sup>39</sup> In many cases the *mahajans* leased out the agricultural land acquired through purchase to the erstwhile owners on a share cropping basis.<sup>40</sup> The *mahajans* resorted to share cropping because they were not able to cultivate the entire land with the help of their family members. Where they had taken a mortgage on the lands of the *ryots*, the latter were permitted to cultivate the land on payment of revenue at the normal rate to the *mahajan* mortgagee who in turn disclosed it as his *khudkashta* to the state to be assessed on

concessional rate. He appropriated the difference of the amount collected from the ryot and revenue paid to the state, as profit. The extent to which the *mahajans* were earning profit by this manner can be gauged by an instance in the year 1763 AD. It was reported by the *amil* of pargana Chatsu to the *darbar* that the *jama* had decreased because many *paltis* of qasba Chatsu and other villages had mortgaged their fields to the *bohra*. The *paltis* were required to continue to pay to the *mahajan* land revenue at the rate of Rs 3 per bigha whereas the latter was paying state revenue at the rate of Re 1.50 per bigha since he showed the land as a part of his *gharu kashta*. Thus he appropriated Rs 1.50 per bigha.<sup>41</sup>

### *Exploitation of the Peasants*

The burden that such debt imposed on the peasants was not light because the *mahajans* charged very high rates of interest ranging from 10 percent to 25 per cent per annum. They usually advanced agricultural loans for a period of six months and if not repaid within the time, the interest due was added to the principal, and a fresh bond was extracted from the borrower.<sup>42</sup> Thus constantly compounding the interest they brought about the ruin of the peasants in many cases. The way in which the peasantry was affected by indebtedness can be shown by some examples from the original documents. In one case we find the *ryots* of qasba Chatsu who had mortgaged their fields to the *mahajan* due to famine abandoning cultivation altogether. The financial burden on the peasantry increased due to this transaction because the *mahajan* demanded half of the produce from the *ryots*. In addition to that the latter had to pay the state revenue. The *ryots* could not have hoped to save sufficiently for their subsistence,<sup>43</sup> and had to give up cultivation. In another case we find the *ryots* borrowing grain from the *bohra* at the time of scarcity and unable to return it due to continuous famine. The *bohra* after calculating the amount of interest, added it to the principal and raised it to double. A fresh bond was extracted from the borrowers who were compelled to sell their fields to the *bohra*. The *mahajan* after acquiring the fields and wells of the *ryot* started pursuing *gharu kashta* on these lands and the erstwhile *maliks* were reduced to the status of tenants.<sup>44</sup> There is an instance to show the ruination of an entire peasant family due to indebtedness to the *mahajan*. Khiwa Jat of the village of Choru in pargana Fagi borrowed money from Jassa Patni, the *mahajan* of the village. The indebtedness of the peasant compelled him to become a *pahi*. He went to the village of Mandawari in pargana Hindaun to pursue cultivation. He brought a full cart load of grain to the *mahajan* after the harvest to pay off his debt. The *mahajan* asserted that the peasant had had a bumper crop this time but brought in a very little quantity of grain. He insisted on the peasant clearing the entire debt. This led to hot altercation between the two and in desperation, the peasant committed suicide by consuming an overdose of opium. The property of the deceased peasant was sold away by the *mahajan*.<sup>45</sup>

It can be concluded from the foregoing instances that the *mahajans* exploited the poor peasants by taking undue advantage of their hardship. In such cases they played a retrogressive role in the development of the rural economy. They brought about the ruination of the *ryots* by depriving them of their immediate means of livelihood.

### *Indebtedness of the Rural Dignitaries*

The extent to which other sections of the rural society fell into debt is also examined. The rural dignitaries, the *zamindars*, *jagirdars* and *patel* were also heavily dependent on the *mahajans* for their monetary requirements. Sometimes they fell into debt as they stood surety on behalf of the *ryots* for agricultural loans.<sup>46</sup> In such cases they had the full responsibility to repay the loan to the *mahajan*. In one case we find the agent of the *jagirdar* reporting to the state on behalf of his master that the *jagirdar* requested the *bohra* to advance *tagai* loan to the *ryot* and himself stood surety for the safe return of the money. Meanwhile the *jagirdar* was ordered to serve in the Deccan by the ruler. The *mahajan* started picketing outside the house of the *jagirdar* and insisted on his repaying the loan for which he had furnished surety. The *jagirdar* before proceeding to his new assignment made a settlement with the *ryot*, that the latter would pay the loan in easy instalments. Later on the *ryot* refused to pay off the debt. The *mahajan* went to the Deccan to pursue the *jagirdar* for the payment of his debt and started picketing his house there. Ultimately the *jagirdar* had to seek the state's intervention for arbitration of the dispute.<sup>47</sup>

However, this was not the only way by which the rural dignitaries fell into debt. They also borrowed money from the *mahajans* for their other needs. In one case we find the *mahajan* of the village of Toda reporting to the state that he had advanced a loan of Rs 1000 to Raj Singh Shekhawat the *jagirdar* on the recommendation of the state. The *jagirdar* had failed to pay the amount within the specified period. The *amil* was instructed to confiscate the *hasil* of the *jagir* so that the *mahajan's* debt could be paid.<sup>48</sup> In another instance we find the state issuing a *parwana* in favour of *bohra* Lunkaran Natani thereby instructing the *pargana* officials to assist the *mahajan* in realizing his loan outstanding against the *zamindars* of the *pargana*. He was allowed to charge interest at the rate of 25 per cent per annum.<sup>49</sup> In another case we find the *jagirdar* protesting against the *amil* who had issued a *talab* to the *patel*, *ryots*, of the village and *vasaidars*<sup>50</sup> of the petitioner at the instigation of the *mahajan* who wanted to realize his loan outstanding against him for the last twenty years.<sup>51</sup>

It is evident from the above that the *mahajans* enjoyed a unique position in the rural economy and also security for the safe return of their money. Basically the money lending class, they were able to gain control over the village economy by virtue of their monetary resources. They were assisted by the state for realisation of their debt from the peasants, *zamindars* and *jagirdars*. On many occasions the *mahajans* were equally important

to the state for its financial requirements. At the time of famine and scarcity, the state occasionally found it difficult to meet the requirement of the *ryots* for *tagai* out of its own resources and managed such loans from the *mahajans*.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the *mahajans*, were an integral part of the administrative machinery and of the village society. We find the state asking the *amils* to look for honest and modest *mahajans* and induce them to settle in the *pargana*.<sup>53</sup> In many cases we find the state tempting the *mahajans* to distribute agricultural resources to the *ryots* on credit. As a security measure they were granted a *parivana* empowering them to collect the *jama* at the time of harvest if the debt was not paid.<sup>54</sup> The *Amils* were especially instructed to protect the *mahajans* against the harassment by *zamindars* and *jagirdars*.<sup>55</sup>

The *mahajan* occupied a very high status in the rural society and exercised a great deal of influence in the affairs of the society by virtue of the power of his purse. Their power and influence in the rural society can be illustrated by some examples. In a dispute between the *mahajan* and the *patel* of the village regarding the ownership of land, the *mahajan* was killed by the brother of the *patel*. The *patel* was ousted from the village by the *panchayat*. Later on the *patel* in a petition requested the state that he had a large holding in the village and had been very regular in paying considerable revenue to the state. He pleaded his innocence in the crime. The petitioner expressed his desire to resettle in the village and offered Rs 151 as *taksirana* to the state. The *amil* was instructed to restore the *patel* to his previous position. But the efforts of the *patel* to regain his lost position proved fruitless as this move was strongly opposed by the entire village community on the ground that they had lost their *bohra* because of this murderer (*patel*). They threatened to desert the village *en bloc* if the *patel* was permitted to resettle in the village. The *amil* was ordered not to implement the instruction and the *patel* was arrested.<sup>56</sup>

### *Gaining Control over Rural Economy*

The *mahajans* were also bringing about a significant development in the rural society by acquiring the hereditary offices of the village officials through purchase. In many cases they directly secured the offices which were vacant due to absence of incumbents by offering a good amount as *nazrana* to the state.<sup>57</sup> We find the *mahajans* acquiring the offices of the *patel*, *patwari* and *chaudhary* by the power of their purse.<sup>58</sup> In one case we find Ghasi Ram Matani the *mahajan* of qasba Lalsot purchasing the office of *chaudhary* over 5 villages in *pargana* Lalsot in the year of VS 1812/1755 AD.<sup>59</sup> In another instance we find Moti Ram Mahajan acquiring the office of *patwari* of qasba Chatsu after paying Rs 1,500 to the state as *nazrana*.<sup>60</sup> Similarly we find *bohra* Malookchand acquiring the offices of *chaudhary*, *Qanungoh* of four *tappas* of *pargana* Bahutri after paying Rs 2,501 as *peshkaih* to the state.<sup>61</sup> In some cases they induced the *ryots* to support their candidature for securing

vacant offices. Thus we find Roopa Maheshwari, the *mahajan* of the village of Luhara, acquiring the office of *qanungoh* in pargana Chatsu with the support of the *ryots*.<sup>62</sup> In a dispute regarding the ownership of *chaudhary* rights, we find the state conferring the office to the person whose claim was supported by the *mahajans* of *qasba* Dausa.<sup>63</sup>

Though the work of moneylending and trade was separated from the work of revenue collection, even then we find that the *mahajans* were directly or indirectly involved in the work of revenue collection through the system of *ijaradari*.<sup>64</sup> The widespread practice of *ijara* especially during the 18th century, provided the *mahajans* an opportunity to penetrate into the work of revenue collection, thus enabling them to control the rural economy. The *mahajans* entered in the field of *ijaradari* in a dual capacity. Firstly, they furnished surety<sup>65</sup> to the state on behalf of the *ijaradars* who were usually the *zamindars*, *muqaddams* and *chaudaries*. In turn they got a share out of the profit of the *ijaradar*. The importance of the role of *mahajans* as a guarantor (*mal jamin*) can be visualized from the fact that the preference for granting *ijara* was given to those who could furnish surety of the *mahajans*.<sup>66</sup> The *mahajans* found it a less risky game than directly entering in the field of *ijara* which could have proved foolhardy in situations where local connections as well as military strength was necessary for the collection of land revenue.<sup>67</sup>

However, there was a shift in the role of *mahajans* in the field of *ijara* especially marked from the second half of the 18th century. In the context of weakening of the central authority and the growing financial problems arising out of the constant Maratha incursions, the agrarian policy of the state underwent a change in order to secure as much money as it could by granting *khalisa* lands on *ijara*.<sup>68</sup> The *mahajans* now started investing their money in bidding for *ijaras* themselves. The growing practice of *ijara* opened up good prospects for investment and provided a lucrative outlet for the *mahajans* who had a close knowledge of the revenue-paying capacity of the areas. However, it would be misleading to assume that the *mahajans* entered into the field of *ijara* merely for speculative purposes and emerged as absentee landlords. In the majority of cases *mahajans* who went in for *ijara* were influential cultivators holding *gharu kashts* and had local connections.<sup>69</sup> They carefully took into consideration the agrarian conditions of the area before bidding for the *ijara*.<sup>70</sup> There was keen competition among the *mahajans* to acquire large tracts of land on *ijara*. The *mahajans* even pleaded for the resumption of *ijara* from persons holding it on the promise of paying a larger amount.<sup>71</sup> Some of the *mahajans* tried to secure lucrative tracts on *ijara* through their influence over the state revenue official. Thus Mohan Ram Inder Chand Mahajan secured the *ijara* of two taluqas of pargana Khandela through the *amil* for a sum of Rs 69,000, whereas the *ijaradar* estimated the *jama* of these taluqas at about Rs 1,00,000.<sup>72</sup> The growing eagerness of the *mahajans* to take *ijara* appears to be a new feature. Its causes and background however, needs

to be investigated. The assumption that trade and commerce was in decline during this period due to the disturbed conditions created by the Marathas and that the *mahajans* found an alternative or even more lucrative field for profit again needs to be investigated carefully, as does the role of the state in securing the peasantry against being reduced to the status of agricultural labourer.

- <sup>1</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Lalsot of Sawan Vadi II, VS 1813/1756 AD, Daftar Diwan Huzuri, Jaipur Records, Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner.
- <sup>2</sup> Dilbagh Singh, "Ijaradari System in Eastern Rajasthan (c. 1750-1800)" Paper presented to the VI session of *Rajasthan History Congress*, January 1973.
- <sup>3</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils, Pargana Chatsu, Asarh Sudi, VS 1815/1758 AD, Magishri Vadi 7, VS 1812/1755 AD, Asoj Vadi 5, VS 1814/1757 AD; Pargana Lalsot, Sawan Vadi 14, VS 1811/1754; Pargana Bahutri, Asarh Sudi 15, VS 1817/1760 AD; Pargana Swai Jaipur, Khohri, Gaji Ka Thana, Narnaul Vdehi, Vazirpur, Pahari, Pinain, Dausa, etc. and Asarh Vadi, VS 1817/1760 AD; Pargana Gaji Ka Thana and Asarh Sudi 5, VS 1804/1747 AD.
- <sup>4</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Gaji Ka Thana, Asarh Sudi 5, VS 1804/1747 AD; Pargana Lalsot, Asarh Sudi 14, VS 1815/1758 AD; Pargana Chatsu, Magishri Vadi 7, VS 1812/1755 AD, Asaj Vadits, VS 1814/1757 AD, Asarh Sudiz VS 1815/1758 AD; Pargana Malarana, Asarhi Sudi 7, VS 1812/1755 AD.
- <sup>5</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Mauzabad, Sawan Vadi 12, VS 1811/1754 AD; Sawan Sudi 9, VS 1819/1762 AD; Pargana Lalsot, Sawan Vadi 14, VS 1811/1754 AD; Pargana Bahutri, Asarh Sudi 15, VS 1817/1760 AD; Pargana Gaji Ka Thana, Pos Sudiz, VS 1796/1739 AD; Sawan Sudi II, VS 1809/1752 AD.
- <sup>6</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Mauzabad, Bhadwa Vadi 6, VS 1815/1758 AD, Sawan Sudi 9, VS 1819/1762 AD; Pargana Chatsu, Asarh Sudiz, VS 1815/1758 AD, Asarh Vadi VS 1820/1763 AD; Pargana Lalsot, Asarh Sudi 14, VS 1815/1758 AD.
- <sup>7</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Gaji ka Thana, Asarh Sudi VS 1799/1742 AD; Pargana Fagi, Pos Sudiz 11 VS 1783/1726 AD; Pargana Mauzabad, Bhadwavi 6, VS 1815/1758 AD.
- <sup>8</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Chatsu, Asarh Sudi 2, VS 1815/1758 AD; Magishri Vadi 7, VS 1812/1755 AD; Asaj Vadi 6, VS 1814/1757 AD; Pargana Malarana, Asarh Sudi 7, VS 1812/1755 AD; Pargana Lalsot, Sawan Vadi 14, VS 1811/1754 AD, Asarh Sudi 14, Pargana Swai Jaipur, Khohri, Gaji ka Thana, Narayana, Niwai, Narnaul, Gaori, Tonk, Toda, Rai Singh, Toda Bhim, Daura, Vazirpur, etc., Miti Asarh Vadi VS 1817/1760 AD.
- <sup>9</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Bahutri, Asarh Sudi 15, VS 1817/1760 AD.

- <sup>10</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Lalsot, Asarh Sudi 14, VS 1815/1758 AD.
- <sup>11</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Chatsu, Asoj Vadi 5, VS 1814/1757 AD.
- <sup>12</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils of Pargana Swai Jaipur, Khohri, Gaji ka Thana, Narnaul, Tonk, Bahutri, etc., Asarh Vadi 2, VS 1817/1760 AD.
- <sup>13</sup> *Chithis* from Diwan Hargovind Kanhi Ram to the Amils Pargana Chatsu Falgun Vadi 3, VS 1810/1753 AD; from Diwan Narayan Das Kirpa Ram to Shah Dod Raj Narayan Chand, the Amils of Pargana, Fagi, Pos Sudi 11, VS 1783/1726 AD, Kati Vadi 8, VS 1780/1723 AD. *Chithis* to the Amils of Pargana Swai Jaipur, Khohri, Gaji ka Thana, Narayana, Niwai, Narnaul, Pragpur, Bairath, Mallura, Ramgarh, Sherpur, Udehi etc., Miti Asarh Vadi VS 1817/1760 AD.
- <sup>14</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Mauzabad, Bhadwa Vadi 6, VS 1815/1758 AD, Pargana Gaji ka Thana Falgun Vadi 9, VS 1797/1740 AD, Kati Vadi 12, VS 1799/1722 AD.
- <sup>15</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Chatsu, Asarh Sudiz, VS 1815/1758 AD; Pargana Malarana, Asarh Sudi 7, VS 1812/1755 AD; Pargana Lalsot, Sawan Vadi 14, VS 1811/1754 AD; Pargana Bahutri, Asarh Sudi 15, VS 1817/1760 AD; Pargana Swai Jaipur, Khohri, Gaji ka Thana, Narayana, etc., Miti Asarh Vadi VS 1817/1760 AD.
- <sup>16</sup> *Chithis* from Diwan Murli Dhar to the Amil Pargana Chhota Rampura, Sawan Sudiz, VS 1812/1755 AD; from Swai Ram, the Amil of Pargana Rampura to Diwan Murli Dhar Shiv Nath, Bhadwa Vadi 3, VS 1813/1756 AD, *Amber Records, Historical Section*. *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Chatsu, Vaisakhsudi 3, VS 1820/1763 AD; Pargana Fagi, Bhadwa Vadi VS 1780/1723 AD; Pargana Mauzabad, Sawan Sudi 9, VS 1819/1762 AD.
- <sup>17</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Mauzabad, Sawan Vadi 12, VS 1811/1754 AD; Pargana Malarana, Falgun Vadi 12, VS 1825/1768 AD.
- <sup>18</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Fagi, Jethvadil, VS 1784/1727 AD.
- <sup>19</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Mauzabad, Bhadwa Vadi 6, VS 1815/1758 AD, Sawan Vadi 12, VS 1811/1754 AD.
- <sup>20</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Mauzabad, Bhado Vadi 6, VS 1815/1758 AD.
- <sup>21</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Mauzabad, Sawan Vadi 12, VS 1811/1754 AD.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> *Sanad* to the Amil Pargana Sher Pur, Pos Vadi, 7, VS 1819/1762 AD.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid. Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Gaji ka Thana, Chaitra Sudi 2, VS 1801/1744 AD.
- <sup>25</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Fagi, Vaisakh Sudi, VS 1826/1769 AD.
- <sup>26</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Mauzabad, Bhado Vadi 6, VS 1815/1758 AD.
- <sup>27</sup> The term *Palti* was used for cultivators, both proprietors and tenants belonging to the lower castes.
- <sup>28</sup> *Chithi* from Diwan Narayan Das Kirpa Ram to Shah Dodraj Narain Chand, the Amils Pargana Fagi, Pos Sudi 11, VS 1783/1726 AD.

- <sup>29</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Gaji ka Thana, Asarh Sudi 3, VS 1799/1792 AD; Pargana Mauzabad, Bhadwa Vadi 6, VS 1815/1758 AD; Pargana Fagi, Pos Vadi 11, VS 1783/1726 AD.
- <sup>30</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Mauzabad, Sawan Sudi 9, VS 1819/1762 AD.
- <sup>31</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Gaji ka Thana, Asarh Sudi 3, VS 1799/1742 AD; Pargana Mauzabad, Bhadwa Vadi 6, VS 1815/1758 AD. Satish Chandra "Some Aspects of Indian Village Society in Northern India during the 18th Century—the Position and Role of the Khudkashta and Pati Kashta." Paper presented to the XXIX session of *International Congress of Orientalists*, Paris, July, 1973.
- <sup>32</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Gaji ka Thana, Sawan Sudi II VS 1809/1752 AD.
- <sup>33</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Gaji ka Thana, Asarh Sudi 3 VS 1799/1742 AD.
- <sup>34</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Bahutri, Asoj Vadi 6, VS 1817/1760 AD; Pargana Chatsu, Jeth Sudi 4, VS 1820/1763 AD, Sawan Sudi 2, VS 1823/1766 AD; Pargana Mauzabad, Kati Vadi 6, VS 1817/1760 AD; Pargana Fagi, Bhadwa Vadi, VS 1780/1723 AD.
- <sup>35</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Chatsu, Vaisakh Sudi 3, VS 1820/1763 AD; Pargana Gaji ka Thana, Chaitra Vadi 7, VS 1827/1770 AD; Pargana Mauzabad, Sawan Sudi 9, VS 1819/1762 AD.
- <sup>36</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Mauzabad, Bhadwa Vadi 6, VS 1815/1758 AD, Sawan Sudi 9, VS 1819/1762 AD; Pargana Chattri, Asarh Vadi VS 1820/1763 AD, Vaisakh Sudi 3, VS 1820/1763 AD; Pargana Fagi, Bhadwa Vadi VS 1780/1723 AD.
- <sup>37</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Mauzabad, Bhadwa Vadi, VS 1815/1758 AD, Sawan Sudi 9, VS 1819/1762 AD; Pargana Chatsu, Asarh Vadi, VS 1820/1763 AD; Vaisakh Sudi 3, VS 1820/1763 AD; Pargana Fagi, Bhadwa Vadi VS 1780/1723 AD.
- <sup>38</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Chatsu, Asarh Vadi, VS 1820/1763 AD.
- <sup>39</sup> *Chithis* to the Amil Pargana Mauzabad, Sawan Sudi 9, VS 1819/1762 AD; Pargana Chatsu, Vaisakh Sudi 3, VS 1820/1763 AD; Pargana Fagi, Bhadwa Vadi VS 1780/1723 AD.
- <sup>40</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Chatsu, Vaisakh Sudi 3, VS 1820/1763 AD.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* It was reported to the state by the Amil of Pargana Chatsu that many *asamis* in qasba Chatsu and other villages had mortgaged their lands to the *bohra*. He is charging the mortgagers (*Paltis*) revenue at the rate of Rs 3 per bigha.
- <sup>42</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Mauzabad, Sawan Sudi VS 1819/1762 AD.
- <sup>43</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Chatsu, Asarh Vadi, VS 1820/1763 AD.
- <sup>44</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Mauzabad, Sawan Sudi 9, VS 1819/1762 AD.
- <sup>45</sup> *Chithi* to Shah Dod Raj Narayan Chand, Amils of Pargana Fagi, Jeth Vadi, VS 1784/1727 AD.

- <sup>46</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Mauzabad, Sawan Vadi 12, VS 1811/1754 AD; Pargana Malan, Falgun Vadi 12, VS 1825/1768 AD.
- <sup>47</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Malarana, Falgun Vadi 12, VS 1825/1768 AD.
- <sup>48</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Gaji ka Thana, Sawan Sudi 11, VS 1809/1752 AD.
- <sup>49</sup> The term *Varidar* was used for those cultivators who were settled by the *jagirdar* to cultivate the fallow lands in the village.
- <sup>50</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Gaji ka Thana, Chaitra Sudi 2, VS 1801/1744 AD.
- <sup>51</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Bahutri, Asarh Sudi 15, VS 1817/1760AD; Pargana Lalsot, Asarh Sudi 14, VS 1815/1758 AD; Pargana Swai Jaipur, Khohri, Gaji ka Thana, Narayana, Nawai, Narnaul, Tonk, Chatsu, Pragpur, etc., Miti, Asarh Vadi, VS 1817/1760 AD.
- <sup>52</sup> *Chithi* to the Amils Pargana Gaji ka Thana, Asarh Sudi 5, VS 1304/1747 AD; Pargana Toda Rai Singh, Toda, Bhim, Udehi, Sherpur, Vazirpur, Gaori, Ramgarh, Malarana, Lalsot, etc., Miti, Asarh Vadi VS 1817/1760 AD.
- <sup>53</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Lalsot, Asarh Sudi 14, VS 1815/1758 AD; Pargana Chatsu, Asarh Sudi 2, VS 1815/1758 AD.
- <sup>54</sup> *Chithi* to the Faujdar and Amil Pargana Gaji ka Thana, Asarh Sudi 3, VS 1799/1742 AD:
- <sup>55</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Chatsu, Jeth Sudi 12, VS 1821/1764 AD, Pos Vadi 3, VS 1821/1764 AD.
- <sup>56</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Chatsu, Bhādwā Sudi 15, 1816/1759 AD.
- <sup>57</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Lalsot, Bhadwa Sudi 12, VS 1826/1769 AD; Pargana Chatsu, Vaisakh Vadi 10, VS 1812/1755 AD.
- <sup>58</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Lalsot, Bhado Sudi 12, VS 1826/1769 AD.
- <sup>59</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Chatsū, Asarh Vadi 9, VS 1816/1759 AD.
- <sup>60</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Chatsu, Bhado Sudi 15, VS 1822/1755 AD.
- <sup>61</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Bahutri, Asoj Sudi 3, VS 1817/1760 AD.
- <sup>62</sup> *Chithi* to the Amil Pargana Chatsu, Sawan Vadi 12, VS 1816/1759AD.
- <sup>63</sup> *Chithis* to the Amils Pargana Dausa, Sawan Vadi 12, VS 1816/1759 AD, Asarh Vadi, VS 1816/1759AD, Bhadwa Sudi 15, VS 1816/1759AD.
- <sup>64</sup> Satish Chandra, "The Village Society," Paper presented at the seminar on *Transformation of the Mediaeval Indian Economy into Colonial Economy*, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 1971.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>66</sup> Dilbagh Singh, *op. cit.*
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>68</sup> Satish Chandra, *op. cit.*
- <sup>69</sup> Dilbagh Singh, *op. cit.*
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

HABIB TANVIR

## *Theatre is in the Villages*

FOR whatever it may be worth, State support to theatre in this country, both direct and indirect, has had an overwhelmingly urban-elitist orientation. This is strange, considering that this vast sub-continent, still mostly agrarian, represents a multi-lingual people, still by and large illiterate. So, Indian culture is like a crystal reflecting a myriad shades. The elitist orientation of our cultural policy does not take into account this fact. It ignores sizeable areas of the country alive with millions of people speaking numerous tongues. The people of these rural regions, rich in their cultural heritage, have so far been largely deprived of education. Worse might follow if with the spread of education in the countryside, they are robbed of their culture. The Fifth Five Year Plan must ensure against this right now, or else the results will be appalling.

### *Urban Theatre*

The urban theatre of India only partially reflects the fundamental features of Indian culture. By and large, it remains imitative. It tries to ape the conventions of the Western theatre. At its worst, it represents a pale copy of the most worn-out Western traditions in theatre. At its best, it again reflects Western forms recently evolved through a rigorous process of experimentation. Nonetheless there are producers and theatre groups in Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and elsewhere that are engaged in original

work of a very valuable nature. They are mostly involved in experiments with Indian folk theatre forms. Though in a country of vast cultural resources like India, their number is deplorably low, they have already managed to break new ground and lay the foundation of a genuine Indian theatre. And this is also beginning to get reflected in the 'works of some young and promising playwrights. For instance, Girish Karnad's interesting Kannada play 'Haya Vadana' (Half Horse), based upon an ancient Indian legend which also inspired Thomas Mann to write his novel 'Transposed Heads', draws richly from a Mysore folk theatre form known as the *Yakshagana*. Similarly, the Bengali playwright-producer Utpal Dutt recently turned the Bengali folk theatre form of *Jatra* to great political advantage by using its technique in his recent play about Lenin 'Leniner Dak'; P L Deshpande of Bombay has done the same with his Marathi plays written and produced in a Marathi folk theatre style known as *Tamasha*<sup>1</sup>

The trend itself is not a new phenomenon. It dates back to the Indian Peoples' Theatre Association during the late forties when producers like Balraj Sahni, Shombhu Mitra and Dina Pathak for the first time turned folk theatre forms to contemporary purposefulness. Today, however, a concerted effort of greater significance has to be made in order to make a dent in the lop-sided development of our theatre.

It must now be realised that the vehicle provided by urban theatre forms borrowed from the West is totally inadequate for effectively projecting the social aspirations, way of life, cultural patterns and fundamental problems of contemporary India. The true pattern of Indian culture in all its facets can best be witnessed in the countryside. It is in its villages that the dramatic tradition of India in all its pristine glory and vitality remains preserved even to this day. It is these rural drama groups that require real encouragement. They need to be given an environment conducive to their fullest growth. On the other hand, it is not until the city youth is fully exposed to influence from folk traditions in theatre that a truly Indian theatre, modern and universal in appeal and indigenous in form, can really be evolved.

It is yet to be fully realised that ignorance of one's own traditions limits one's openness to world influences to that extent and rather compels one to go in directions other than those of one's own choice. And if true freedom is a matter of the fullest range of choices given, then receptiveness to world culture must first of all be adequately backed by a full awareness of one's own culture. It is not as if foreign influences are in themselves bad, but they have to be accepted with a greater freedom of choice and greater deliberation. For this, knowledge of one's own traditions is a first prerequisite. This realisation, however, is bedevilled by a terrible paradox. The paradox is that our richest cultural tradition is couched in areas of utmost poverty - the villages. In other words, art and culture is richest precisely in those areas where

the people are the poorest. And these comprise the overwhelming population of India.

### *Traditional Culture vs. Economic Growth*

The paradox assumes complexity when you consider India's urgent need for economic development and social transformation. At present it must galvanise its process of industrialisation and accelerate economic progress, in order that the great poverty of a great number of its people is quickly diminished, if not effaced. The paradox is whether economic and industrial growth will not also remove, along with the overwhelming poverty of the people, the richest cultural traditions of the country. In the past, community life of the people in the countryside and, with it, its cultural expression, has suffered a setback in many parts of the vast sub-continent due to rude incursions from the mass-media, the camp followers of industrialisation. Everyone is aware that with change in the social fabric, the cultural fabric of peoples' life will change too. But the question is whether the past must be crushed before the future is ushered in. This does not seem necessary. The old can perhaps be absorbed and transformed into the new. This need for continuity in change in the living traditions of Indian culture ought to be of utmost concern to us at the present moment for it is related also to a cultural identity which became some what diluted in the past by the long British rule. The adverse effects of 200 years of British rule are most evident in the urban-elitist oriented culture of India, whose expressions often represent the worst forms of aping of the West.

It is necessary, therefore, not only to preserve and develop the folk traditions of Indian art and culture but also to expose the city youth to their influence. Our educational system in the past, borrowed of necessity again from the British, hardly ensured an identification of the young with their cultural roots. On the contrary, it tended to expand the cultural gulf that already existed between the city and the village, resulting in a partial loss of cultural identity among the city youth on the one hand and a certain alienation and stagnation of a primitive culture among the rural people on the other. This cleavage must now be closed as far as possible by a culturally-oriented educational programme, covering the entire country.

Re-orientation and expansion of education, however, may by itself not deliver the goods. It needs to be complemented by a stupendous effort in the direction of fully rehabilitating the dwindling folk arts and crafts of India.

### *Revival of Folk Drama*

The rural scene has undergone a great deal of change in the past, to the detriment of culture, but thanks to its size and the vitality of its traditions, India is still India. It remains poor and agrarian still to a considerable degree, and its classical and folk traditions of art and culture still

exist in some strength in large parts of the country. This offers inspiration for the theatre artists of India. It points out a way, the kind of way perhaps that Peter Brook may be said to be seeking for his so-called Dead Theatre of the West. Whether or not such a way of hope lies in this area, there is no doubt that it needs careful examination. The task in itself would appear to be rewarding enough. That is why a serious and conscious effort must now be made to rejuvenate traditions of art and culture where they are dwindling and re-inforce and develop them where they still remain integrally related to the life of the community. It must flow from a deep-rooted feeling that if the folk arts of India really represent the genuine fabric of the tapestry of Indian culture, then rehabilitating and strengthening them will perhaps help the process of evolution of new and viable contemporary forms in theatre, distinctively Indian and yet suitable as vehicles of communication in a technological age.

Very soon India will have launched its Television satellite, which if rightly channelised is expected to accelerate tremendously the pace of universal education. On the other hand, if good care is not taken and in good time, it may also swamp the country with cultural products, which have little to do with the true genius of the country. It may kill community life in all its variegated interesting little patterns and flatten out art and culture. Before it is allowed to become an impediment to the dynamics of the traditional creative processes of the country, action must be undertaken on a massive scale to preserve, re-instate and develop the living folk arts of the people. Television must not be allowed to overtake this process. On the contrary, conditions must be created to feed the massive appetite of this electronic medium with the most genuine in the creative arts, so that when the medium begins to disseminate its message, instead of regimentation in a cultural vacuum we obtain multiplication of the most dynamic art forms of the country.

It is no use turning to the dead book of the classical theatre in India and trying to revive the archaic theatre forms of yesterday without relating them to the living traditions of today. There are some people who tend to do this. They are revivalists, in the worst sense of chauvinism, who have failed to perceive the complex but obvious inter-relationship between the classical and the folk performing arts. They do not realise that the folk traditions in art are not only the progenitors of the ultimate classical structure but also the carriers of classical traditions when the latter come to a dead end in their own habitat. The fact that the people change and transform the classical elements of art to their own purpose and advantage and keep modifying them to suit their changing needs and conditions strengthens the case in their favour rather than otherwise, in so far as any conscious effort to link cultural development with traditions is concerned.

The classical dances of India provide an excellent example. They have received constant nourishment from the folk artists not only in the

sense of being exhaustively sculpted and painted by them on rocks and temples in past ages causing a great revival of classical dances in the present century but also in the sense of some being practised by them through the centuries right up to the present day in one form or another giving rise to interesting variations which in modern times came to be recognised as independent classical dances in their own right. The classical structure in art is nothing but a terse crystallisation of the folk structure in art. That is why some dances like Manipuri and Odissi, recently discovered, which have been practised by the people as folk dances for long centuries, have now been recognised as two more classical dances. On the other hand, one sees many elements of classical dances like the Bharata Natyam and Kathakali running into varying patterns in the numerous street dances of Kerala, Mysore and Tamilnadu.

This inter-relationship between the classical and the folk is no less evident in the sphere of drama, except to the blind or the most bigoted. The unimaginative pedants, who refuse to see the mutual inter-flow of influences between the two categories of arts, allow themselves to be misled by the fact that the classical Sanskrit drama of India has ceased to exist as a living force for a thousand years. They forget that the various musical theatre forms, practised through the ages by rural artists all over India and enjoyed so enormously today by millions of country people everywhere, must carry a strong dose of the aesthetic values contained in the Sanskrit drama, which in a sense represents the quintessence of Indian culture. Their perception hardly ever goes beyond the letter of the sacred texts, hallowed by time. They see much poetry, complex plot structure, and fine characterisation in Sanskrit drama, but fail to see the production design and the demands they make on the actor's craft. Even on the verbal level, the professors of Sanskrit drama tend to evaluate their merit with a degree of rare abstraction impossible to conceive for any theatre practitioner. They generally seem to make no significant effort either to relate the written word to the times when it was written, or to our own times. Even if they occasionally do it, they fail deplorably to see the principle involved in creative writing—the principle of contemporary reality aesthetically captured in the written image. Or if by a stroke of luck, they have discovered this principle, they are very often unable to do the obvious and allow it to be applied to the art of improvisation in drama commonly practised by the illiterate folk actors of India.

It appears they go about it more or less in the following way: the language and thought of classical drama is very rich, sophisticated and ornate, whereas the speech and diction of folk drama improvised so often in unwritten dialects by illiterate actors is very coarse, primitive and prosaic—which is of course not at all true—so how can there be any artistic link between the classical and folk theatres? The verbal sophistication and the imaginative use of the spoken word in the rich dialects of the people, so frequently to be witnessed in folk drama, eludes these pun-

dits completely. But even if on occasions, it does not, the rich values of the other dramatic elements in folk theatre improvisations almost invariably do. Even when they recognise them on rare occasions, they tend to run them down also as coarse. The truth is, however, that these other aspects of acting and stage-craft in folk theatre also share a considerable common area with the Indian classical drama. In fact they are but two sides of the same coin, two facets of the same culture. To compartmentalise them is like depriving the people of one half of their rightful cultural heritage and dividing culture in terms of classes, superficially and quite arbitrarily. It is like saying that the *Commedia de'l arte* was coarse art, which had nothing to do with the art of Goldonni. And it is this attitude which tends to push the arts into ivory towers and keeps them from establishing a rapport with the masses of people. Bertolt Brecht's dramas would never have been written if he had shunned the German folk idioms and all the other folk theatre techniques of other countries from which he drew such rich inspiration.

The numerous forms of Indian folk theatre all share some common fundamental values. They all have an epic approach to story-telling in the theatre. Nearly all of them abound in songs, dances, pantomime, improvised repartees, imaginative movement, slapstick comedy, stylised acting, even acrobatics. Almost all of them usually cover a large canvas in their stories and denote change of location by movement and word of mouth rather than by a change of sets and decor. They often have a sort of stage manager, a comic character, who opens and establishes the play and provides the link scenes, and all these are the very elements upon which the classical Sanskrit drama is also based in a broad sense.<sup>2</sup>

The difference actually lies in the improvised dialogue of the folk theatre and its stock situations and plots, which remain nonetheless flexible, incorporating the latest local events and the changing social temper of the people, and satirising topical happenings as they go along. This quality of the folk theatre is what makes for its perfect rapport with its audience. And if serious-minded theatre artists all over the world are at present engaged in devising new dramatic methods for establishing a closer relationship between the theatre and the people—as in fact they are—then there is no reason why India which already has a living indigenous theatre of this kind should not strive to make capital of it for the sake of meeting its contemporary cultural requirements.

### *Indian Folk Drama*

Audience participation on a universal scale is the hall-mark of the Indian folk theatre. The rural audience normally sits on the ground on three or on all four sides of the acting area, usually a simple rectangular platform or a circular clearing in the middle. And again in this particular form of staging a play, there does not seem to be any significant difference between the folk and the classical theatres. We do not know exactly what points of contrasts there might be between the acting methods prevalent

in the contemporary folk theatres and those of the actors of classical drama in ancient times. But this is immaterial. It is perhaps enough to suggest that the folk actors are usually terrific performers with highly stylised acting techniques of their own. As for the classical codes of acting, enumerated elaborately in Bhārata's ancient treatise on drama, the *Natya Shastra*, and illustrated in the mediaeval sculptures and paintings in temples and caves all over the country, many of these are to be witnessed to this day in the *mudras*, gestures and postures of the living masters of Indian classical dances. To an extent, they may also be witnessed, though in a diluted and apparently corrupted form, in the actor's craft in some traditional dramas, as distinct from folk dramas, particularly in the South; but the relevance of these esoteric and archaic acting methods for contemporary drama seems negligible. They are part and parcel of the classical dancer's great art, but in drama they represent a dead form as against the living forms of the folk theatre.

As for Bharata's theory of the *Rasas* this seems to have been instinctively applied to a lesser or greater degree by nearly all practitioners of music and all the other folk and classical performing arts from times immemorial and right up to this day. Only, the folk artist normally does not believe in the purity of an art form. Hence, he does not follow a rigid code of discipline but is often apt to mix up several moods. The result however, is a happy abandon, an exhilarating freedom of expression, an extraordinary aesthetic harmony, original and almost contagious in its appeal. But even Sudraka did precisely this in his *prakarana* "*Mrichchakatika*." And this is what frequently makes a folk theatre performance memorable.

Make-up in the folk theatre in some cases, especially in the South, is extremely elaborate and close to classical patterns. Sometimes, stylised masks are also used. But in many other theatre forms, only the most essential lines are accentuated in extremely simple techniques, including those of the circus clown. In all cases, however, simple and inexpensive indigenous materials are used for the make-up. As for lighting, the simple torches used in the past are now often substituted by ordinary electric bulbs, even tube lights rather clumsily used. Austere economy used to great dramatic effect is applied to the actor's props, which again perhaps smacks of a classical flavour.

Lastly, the Indian folk theatre is total theatre in much the same sense as the classical Indian theatre is. It is at the same time very often a ritualistic theatre, which at once brings it close to both the classical and the modern theatre in the best sense of those words. It is these fundamental links and, above all, the fact that its numerous beautiful forms all represent a people's living theatre that compel us to view it as invaluable source material on which to strive to build the edifice of contemporary Indian drama.

Even for thematic considerations of our times, some of the folk

theatre techniques would appear to provide the aptest instrument of communication, if only for reasons of extreme flexibility of form, which has so far apparently absorbed and reflected the changing social patterns of Indian rural society with a remarkable degree of success.

### *Theatre Workshop*

As a first step an experiment was held recently. A two-week Workshop in the *Nacha* theatre form of Chhattisgarh,<sup>a</sup> as a sort of training programme was held at Raipur last March, which yielded exciting results not only in the villages of that region but also in some metropolitan centres including Delhi, where the Chhattisgarhi dialect, a special form of Hindi, is not spoken at all and hardly understood. It had about a hundred participants, consisting of a nucleus of over 30 folk actors actively involved in the creative process of an improvised production, plus observers who included young artists both rural and urban, some intellectuals and a few of those producers who are expected to conduct similar workshops in the near future in some of the theatre forms of other regions of the country. The director's task was to demonstrate for the benefit of urban observers the efficacy of the simple techniques of acting, stagecraft, make-up, improvisation, stylised movement and dramatic projection of the theme through music, dance and mime, inherent in the *Nacha* theatre of Chhattisgarh. The rural actors were to be helped to draw more deeply from the songs, tunes, dances, rituals, costumes and other cultural resources of their own community life rather than from either the alienated urban cultural forms or the commercial films, and make their plays much more representative of the rural scene—much more genuine and authentic in the folk theatre sense. This was necessary, for the *Nacha* as at present despite its vitality of form and enormous popularity in the countryside shows many alien features which go against the grain of the aesthetics of folk theatre. Simple and better lighting methods were evolved to reject the insipid and ineffective tube-lights, commonly used at present and make simple but better lighting methods from cheap indigenous materials like cans painted from the inside to become good reflectors, cut and adjusted suitably and fitted to ordinary electric bulbs to serve as handmade spots and floods.

Above all, however, this workshop programme was production-oriented. Ultimately, it was to come out with an improvised play in the *Nacha* form, to be presented in public performances. The method of work in all cases was mutual discussion and exchange of ideas and practical try-outs more or less on a collective basis. Out of a number of plays, which they traditionally perform—sort of farcical skits of 20 to 50 minutes' duration—three were selected in the hope that they might be connected together to make up a new plot with a few alterations here and there and the addition of a few new situations yielding some new characters. The collage produced a coherent play of two and a half hours' duration, qualitatively different from the skits which mainly nourished it.

The team of over 30 performers included both very young and

very old people, taken both from professional and non-professional fields. The typical *Nacha* actor is usually a peasant, an agricultural labourer, a village artisan or a shop-keeper. He is also a semi-professional actor in the sense that in his spare time he travels about with his band of actors and musicians unfolding his repertoire of small musical comedies in all-night performances for the benefit of a most receptive rural audience all over the region, usually on a commissioned basis, which proves quite lucrative. The more successful parties give an average of 200 performances in a year. These are spread out in a concentrated form between harvest times, during which the actors tend to their vocations on land and in shops. The typical actor is a versatile artist, with a natural gift for singing, dancing, acting and playing instruments, which he polishes to perfection in the course of his experience. He does not have to be taught movement, voice projection, singing or acting. Being illiterate, he is of necessity an improviser of his own dramatic story and characters. Collective functioning in drama comes naturally to him due to the compulsions of his community life. Sometimes an individual evolves the story but more often a play is a collective product in the fullest sense of the word.

To this team of about ten semi-professional folk artists a sizeable group of housewives and other rural peoples were added, who had never before appeared on the stage but who had the experience of singing and dancing in the temples, fields and homes as part of the process of worship and daily work. Their inclusion brought two excellent advantages. Firstly, the tradition of men doing women's roles was abandoned to accommodate women on the stage. Secondly, relevant songs, dances, rituals and other artistic expressions of the village community life could be used, normally not used in the *Nacha*, thereby making the play even more representative of village life. The inclusion of these also contributed to enrichment of the basic plot and its situations. To this were added authentic folk costumes of the region and essential props suited to the dramatic situations—two elements usually non-existent in the *Nacha* theatre.

A situation was discussed and developed, its characters were evolved and fixed, then roles were distributed to match the characters, and the rest was all improvisation. The dialogues got crystallised through rehearsals, and songs were altered or re-written to suit the situation wherever necessary. The result was an entertaining musical comedy about a rich old man marrying a young girl and in the end losing her to a poor but clever young rogue, her lover. The actors' electrifying improvisations and witticisms turned it into a social satire of some depth. It was christened with a long and funny title reading like a proverb "Gaon Ke Naon Sasural Mor Naon Damad" (The Name of My Home Town is Bridal Chamber, and My Own Name is Mr Bridegroom).

The *Nacha* Workshop of Raipur was a pilot project, sponsored and subsidised by the Central Ministry of Education and Social Welfare as a programme of informal youth education in the arts. In the light of

experience gained by this exercise, many more workshops must be conducted this year and during the Fifth Five Year Plan to gradually cover all the remaining folk theatre forms of India. The programme of informal education for youth in the performing arts, combined with the expansion and re-orientation of formal education during the same period, should demonstrate, on its completion towards the end of the seventies whether or not a new path has been discovered for the eclectic and multi-faceted development of a genuine contemporary Indian theatre. Much of course will depend upon the change brought about in social and economic relations during the next five or six years—its nature and speed. The Indian experiment is total and as yet unpredictable.

- <sup>1</sup> The author himself produced an Urdu play, "Agra Bazar" and recently a folk dramatic improvisation in the *Nacha* style which reflect the same trend.
- <sup>2</sup> Actually it was the folk theatre techniques, which provided the key to my understanding of techniques involved in classical drama and proved so useful for my production of Sanskrit plays such as Sudraka's "Mrichchakatika" (The Clay Cart) and Visakhadatta's "Mudrarakshasa" (The Signet Ring). This annoyed some scholars a little but proved quite popular with the audience.
- <sup>3</sup> This Workshop was directed by the author.

## NOTE

### *Accumulation of Gold in Tanjore Temple - An enquiry into its sources*

THE construction of the Big temple at Tanjore was completed before the reign of Raja Raja I ended. Before his 28th regnal year the temple had acquired a prodigious quantity of gold in the shape of jewels and vessels. The present paper makes an attempt to inquire into the sources from which gold was accumulated in the temple.

The main source materials for this enquiry are collected from Raja Raja's inscriptions<sup>1</sup> found in the Big temple on the Vim Ana. These inscriptions point to a very large hoard of gold in the temple. An inscription of the 29th regnal year of Raja Raja I states that the jewels and vessels were weighed and an inventory made and recorded in an inscription. Similar inventories were made several times during the 28th and 29th regnal years of Raja Raja.<sup>2</sup>

Reading through the whole corpus of the inscriptions, one can conclude that the temple at the time of the inscriptions was in possession of several thousand *kalanchus* of gold in the form of jewels, plates, idols of gods, ornamental articles, vessels, flower like ornaments of gold etc. *Kalanchu* is a small standard weight used to measure the weight of precious metal. One finds a long list of these articles in the possession of the Big temple in Raja Raja's inscriptions inscribed on the Vim Ana.<sup>3</sup>

The inventories not only give a list of articles gifted to the temple but also indicate *how the gold was obtained* to make the jewels, vessels etc.

#### *Emergence of Money Economy*

Gold assumes great value when money economy emerges with the development of trade in a particular region. During the reign of Raja Raja, there was a phenomenal increase in internal trade due to the territorial expansion of the Chola empire and extension of the territorial market. Evidence is also available which shows that extensive trade flourished between the Empire and south east Asian kingdoms and China on the one hand and the Arabian countries on the other. Tax on trade and customs duties were paid in gold.<sup>4</sup>

Hence gold accumulated in the royal coffers. Part of the gold was used for minting coins and another part to pay for imports and as loans to merchant guilds. For internal exchange of commodities barter

system was still in vogue. Gold was also used to buy lands to be converted into Devadana, to make jewels and ornamental articles to be donated to the temple. Gold and gold coins were lent to corporate bodies on interest. Many inscriptions of the Cholas bear evidence to this fact. The surplus gold from the King's treasury was donated to the temple.

A record of the 29th year of Raja Raja gives a list of jewels donated to the Big temple by Raja Raja. After physical verification of the articles and determining the weight of each one of them,<sup>5</sup> they were recorded.

The intention of the record is stated

“நாம் எடுப்பிச்சு திருக்கற்றளி ஸ்ரீராஜேச்சுவா முடையார்க்கு  
நாம் குடுத்தநவும் நம் பெண்டுகள் குடுத்தனவும், மற்றும் ஸ்ரீ விமானத்தில்  
வெட்டுக என்று திருவாய் மொழிஞ்சருளின படி வெட்டி.”

(To Sri Raja Rajathovaramutaiy enshrined in the stone temple erected by us. In accordance with our command that an inventory of articles donated by us, by our women and others be made and that inventory be inscribed on stone in the Vim Ana.)

An instance of how each item of the inventory was described for purpose of identification is given below.

“யாண்டு இருப்பத்தாருவது நாள் பதினானில் உடையார் ஸ்ரீ ராஜ ராஜ  
தேவர் குடுத்த பொன்னின் திருப்பட்டம் ஒன்று ஆடவல்லான் என்றும்  
கல்லால் நிறை தொண்ணூற்று நாற்கழஞ்சேகால்.”

(Year 26, Day 14, the Thirupattam, number one, given by Sri Raja Raja Devar weighs ninety and one quarter *kalanchu* by Adavallan the standard weight).

All the items of the inventory clearly state the name of the donor, the date on which the gift was made, and its weight by an accepted standard weight.

All these records refer to the period from 26th year of Raja Raja to his 29th year. It is not precluded that donations might have been made to the temple even before the earliest record in the 26th year.

The earliest record only points to the earliest date on which the inventory was made and the date on which the order to inscribe it on stone was issued. The inventory includes articles like jewels, idols, pattams, vessels, lamps etc.

Most of these articles are stated to have been made of *pon* (பொன்) It is a moot question to ask if *pon* means gold. A few scholars suggest that *pon* must be interpreted as copper, *panchaloka* or some other base alloy.

But on reading carefully through the relevant records, we can conclude that *pon* means gold. Whenever large cooking vessels are mentioned in the record it is qualified by the phrase, ‘made of copper’. As for example,<sup>6</sup>

“செம்பினால் செய்த கொடி மரச் செம்பு”

“செம்பினால் செய்த கிடாரம்.”

Further we may note that whenever the article is said to be made

of *pon*, its weight is found to be given in *kalanchu*. There is only a rare exception to this general statement. Except one article all the others said to have been made of *pon* are less than 100 *kalanchus* in weight.

Let us look at a few instances of the weights of articles made of *pon*.<sup>7</sup>

Articles	Weight
1 பொன்னின் கொள்கை தேவர் (idol)	829½ <i>kalanchu</i>
2 பொன்னின் திருப்பட்டம் (ornament)	489 „
3 பொன்னின் மண்டை (vessel)	284½ „
4 பொன்னின் தட்டம் (plate)	49¾ „
5 பொன்னின் கவசம் (a small pot)	483 „
6 பொன்னின் படிக்கம் (vessel)	516½ „
7 பொன்னின் இறுமடல் (ornament)	20 „
பொன்னின் கோத்திரபாலர் (idol)	72 „

It is to be noted that the weight of the seven articles was measured in *kalanchu*.

On the other hand large sized vessels, cooking utensils, water pots etc., were measured in *palams* (பலம்). Every one who has a knowledge of measures and weights of the Chola period from inscriptions of the period, certainly know that *palam* is much greater in magnitude than *kalanchu* and was made use of to measure common articles of use like pepper, ghee, sugar and the like.

An article in the inventories which had the greatest weight was a big ceremonial pot made to be installed on the top of the Vim Ana, Vim Ana kalasa. It is said to have been made of copper. But its weight is mentioned in *kalanchus*. Unlike other articles mentioned in the inventories (which are less than 100 *kalanchus* in weight) it weighed 2926 *kalanchu*. The reason for measuring an article made of copper in *kalanchus* will become quite clear on reading the epigraph referring to its weight.

“ஸ்ரீ விமானத்துச் செம்பின் ஸ்தாபித்தறிமால் பைக்கக் குடுத்த செம்புக்கு  
டம் ஒன்று நிறை மூவாயிரத்து எண்பத்து முப்பலத்தில் சுருக்கிற தகடு  
பலபொன் ஆடவல்லானால் இரண்டாயிரத்து தொள்ளாயிரத்து இருபத்  
தாறு கழஞ்சு.”<sup>8</sup>

(The stupa TharimAl was made out of a pot of copper that weighed 3083 *palams*. By treatment (by heat) and admixture with other metals (பலபொன்) the weight of the metal was reduced to 2926 *kalanchu*).

It becomes evident that the copper pot was weighed in *palams* and then the alloy made out of it by treatment and admixture was weighed in *kalanchus*. After treatment and reduction in weight the alloy was not considered to be copper but *panchaloka* பலபொன். This ‘பலபொன்’ or *panchaloka* was used for sacred purposes such as making idols or religious ritual objects. Then *panchaloka* became as precious as gold. Hence it was weighed in *kalanchus*.

Another vessel used for culinary purpose had the greatest weight. It is stated to have been made of *pon*. Its weight is given in *kalanchu*. But

the enormous weight of the vessel in comparison with gold vessels will indicate that the vessel could not have been made of gold. The Kit Aram (a cooking vat) made of *pon* is stated to have weighed 11,742 *kalanchus*. That is the only cooking vessel in the whole list of articles found in the inventory that has such a great weight measured in *kalanchus*. There can be no doubt that this vessel was made of copper. A cooking vessel could not have been made of gold.

Therefore we can conclude that the articles said to have been made of *pon* with weights less than 100 *kalanchus* were made of gold. There are three inscriptions on the Vim Ana of the Big temple dated 26th, 28th and 29th year of Raja Raja. The donors were the king, his women (பெண்கள்) his officers, sister and other devotees. If we try to estimate the value of these gold articles at the time they were donated we shall stand amazed at the great wealth in the shape of gold that remained in the possession of the Big temple. But we have no means to ascertain the value of gold either in terms of absolute value or of exchange value, though there are some indications in later inscriptions from which it will be possible to calculate the value of gold coins or one *kalanchu* gold in its relation to food grains, sheep, cows or land. But we are not concerned with that here. Yet a mention is made here about an information given in the inscriptions that the price of 2 *kalams* of paddy was 1 gold coin.<sup>9</sup> Here is a clue as to how the value of gold in the temple could be calculated in terms of *kalams* of paddy. But the hitch comes when we ask the question, how many *kasus* made one *kalanchu*. So at present we have to leave the question of the relative value of gold an open question.

### *Sources of Accumulation of Gold*

Let us now pose the question, how was such a great quantity of gold acquired by the temple? The inscriptions giving the inventories suggest answers to the question. Making use of these suggestions and applying our knowledge of the political, economic and social history of the Chola country (for which we are very much indebted to K N Sastry and our epigraphists who have published Chola inscriptions) an attempt is made to find answers to the question posed above.

One inscription states:

- 1 “நாம் குடுத்தனவும் அக்கன் குடுத்தனவும்  
மற்றும் குடுத்தார் குடுத்தனவும்.”
- 2 “உடையார் ராஜ ராஜேச்சர முடையார் பண்டாரத்துக் காட்சி காட்  
டின நீக்கி உடையார் ஸ்ரீ ராஜ ராஜேச்சர முடையார் பண்டாரத்துக்கடி  
முதலான பெரன்னும் ரத்நங்களும், கொண்டு செய்து முதலான  
ஸ்ரீ ராஜ ராஜ தேவர் குடுத்தருளின ரத்நங்களும் சேர்த்து”<sup>10</sup>
- 1 (Donated by us, by a sister and others).  
(Udaiyar Raja Rajsvaram Udaiyar's treasury contained a capital  
store of gold and diamonds. Excluding gold and diamonds open  
for public exhibition, the rest of the stored gold and diamonds

was used in making these jewels. Raja Raja's gifts of diamonds were also made use of).

Another inscription states that gold was gifted from the royal treasury.

தேவர் பண்டாரத்தேயம்—நம் பண்டாரத்தேயம்<sup>11</sup>

It is clear gold was obtained from god's treasury and the king's treasury.

How did a great quantity of gold accumulate in these treasuries?

The temple received income in gold from Nagaram Devadanam lands tenanted by Nagarathar, living in a few villages in Chola mandalam. The trading classes like yarn merchants, and small producers like weavers and artisans paid taxes in cash. Cash taxes were paid to the king by other non-agricultural classes, for example, *vaniapattam*, *chekkirai*. Trading guilds and artisan guilds paid taxes in cash. All this cash was in the form of gold.<sup>12</sup> A part of the gold accumulated in the king's treasury was diverted to the temples to make jewels, idols and ornaments. Hence the gold that found its way to the temple was part of the income from non-agricultural pursuits and trade.

Another source of gold income to the king was from customs duties (சுங்கம்). During the reign of Kulothungan II, there was an agitational movement for remission of customs duties which ended in triumph for the agitators. This is evidenced by an inscriptional reference to Kulothungan II as the emperor who abolished customs levies (Sungam Thavirtha Piran) (சுங்கம் தளிர்த்த பிரான்)<sup>13</sup>

The most stable gold income was from Devadanam Nagaram lands. This can be understood by analysing the data given in Devadanam grants of Raja Raja. Three inscriptions give full particulars of levy on each village to be paid in common by the villagers according to the extent of land they held for cultivation.<sup>14</sup> The ownership of the land in Devadanam villages vested in the temple. The holders of land had to pay *kanikkatan*<sup>15</sup> (land rent).

There were many irregularities in survey and land records relating to Devadanam lands before the days of the concerned inscriptions. Raja Raja surveyed the lands, fixed the extent of tax free lands and classified all other cultivable lands as assessable lands, (இறைகட்டின நிலம்). Then they were declared as Devadanam and the *kanikkatan* payable was fixed at the rate of 100 *kalams* of paddy per *veli*.<sup>16</sup>

In villages where merchant organisations existed (Nagaram) the *kanikkatan* was to be paid in gold.<sup>17</sup>

From the three inscriptions on the Vim Ana a break up of villages that paid the imposition in kind and gold can be obtained.<sup>18</sup>

TABLE I  
VILLAGES CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO PAYMENT OF KANIKKATAN

Number of villages	Fixed land correct to a <i>veli</i>	Payment in paddy (to be paid in <i>kalam</i> )	Payment in gold (in <i>kalanchu</i> )
16	830	83802	297
	SII Vol No 5		
18	540	54991	584
	SII Vol II—92		
10	not given	20687	1239

Total number of villages classified as Devadanam in these inscriptions, is 44, out of which 14 villages paid *kanikkatan* in gold only. The rest of the villages paid tax in paddy.

The total weight of gold collected was 2120 *kalanchu* of gold every year. The total measure of paddy collected was 1,59,480 *kalam*s.

The total expenditure of the temple according to inscriptions, leaving out special festival expenses was 64590 *kalam*s. These two figures were arrived at by adding up the data regarding the annual salaries and daily wages of the employees of the temple<sup>19</sup> and the *Irai Kattina nel*,<sup>20</sup> (இறை கட்டினனனால்).

We can well surmise that the surplus paddy must have been sold to merchant guilds or in the open market for gold.

Thus through direct taxes paid to the temple in gold and the sale of surplus paddy for gold, the precious metal accumulated in large hoards in the temple.

This must have acted as a negative factor in money circulation so gold coins must have been reserved for foreign and wholesale trade. This accounts for the discovery of large hoards of copper coins of Chola period while gold coins are rarely found.

Another channel through which gold accumulated in the temple is revealed by two inscriptions on the Vim Ana.

“உடையார் ஸ்ரீ ராஜ ராஜ தேவர் சேரமானையும் பாண்டியர்களையும் மலை நாட்டில் எறிந்து கொண்ட பண்டாரங்களில் யாண்டு இருப்பத்தாருவது நாள் முன்னூற்று ஒருபத்தொன்பதினால் ஸ்ரீ ராஜ ராஜேச்சுவர முடைய பரமஸ்வாமிக்குக் குடுத்த பொன்னின் சின்னங்கள் ஆடவல்லான் என்றும் கல்லால் நிறையெடுத்து கல்லில் வெட்டினபடி”<sup>21</sup>

(The gold ornamental articles that were brought from the treasuries of the Cheras and the Pandyas after the defeat in the battle of Malainadu at the hands of Udayar Sri Raja Raja Devar were donated to the Parama Swami of the Raja Rajasvara temple. These articles were weighed, a complete inventory made, which was ordered 'by the king) to be inscribed on stone).

Then the inscription lists 53 valuable articles of gold.

Another inscription gives information of the same nature.<sup>22</sup> The purport of the records is that Raja Raja placed at the feet of the God on the Big temple flowers of gold brought from Chalukya country from the treasury of Satyasraya who was defeated in battle.

From the two facts cited above it will become clear that a part of the booty obtained in battle was made over to the temple obviously to wash away the sin of homicide.

Wealth is produced by human labour acting on the ecology of a period through the technology man has mastered at a historical time. There can be no dispute about this statement.

Then the surplus wealth produced by the labour of the working people of the period was shared by the temple which received a portion as *kanikkatan* in the form of paddy and gold—paddy from agricultural classes and gold from trading and artisan classes and booty from defeated kings. The surplus gold was stored and kept in safety as the personal belonging of God to keep the dacoits away.

N VANAMAMALAI

- <sup>1</sup> R Nagaswamy, (ed) *Peruvudaiyar Koil Kalavettukal*, Dept. of Archaeology, Madras.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 12-26, 27-34, 35-47.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>4</sup> T N Subramaniam, (ed) *Temple Inscriptions*, Oriental Manuscript Library.  
Refer to cash taxes to be paid by artisans and trading guilds. Also see Raja Raja's Meykeertis in his inscriptions.
- <sup>5</sup> R Nagaswamy *op. cit.* p 2  
Reference to one *Pandaram* (treasury) in Raja Raja's inscriptions.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 27-34.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup> Sa Ganesan, *Peruvudivath Koil Kalvettukal-Kurippurai*.  
See the reference to Weights and Measures.
- <sup>9</sup> R Nagaswamy, *op. cit.*, p 4.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 2, 3.
- <sup>11</sup> N Vanamamalai, "Thanchai Koilin Chelavum, Nilavaruvium", *Araichi* Vol. IV No. 2 p 119.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p 126.
- <sup>13</sup> Kulothungan II's Meykeerthi and Kalingattupparani-References to Kulothungan II.
- <sup>14</sup> SII Vol II No 4, 5 and 92.
- <sup>15</sup> *Kani* is ownership of land. *Katar* is the right to collect rent for its use. In all Devadanam lands the *Kani* was vested in God, Chandeswara or Sabha.  
Also *vide* Peria Koil Kalvettukal - Kurippurai - Sa Ganesan.
- <sup>16</sup> Read two inscriptions in R Nagaswamy *op. cit.* under the title, Raja Rajan Kuduththa Urkar.
- <sup>17</sup> SII Vol II No 5 and 92  
Whole text reproduced in R Nagaswamy, *op. cit.*
- <sup>18</sup> SII Vol No 4, 5 & 92 reproduced in R Nagaswamy, *op. cit.*
- <sup>19</sup> N Vanamamalai "Tanjore Temple : its expenditure and income" *Araichi* IV-2
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> R Nagaswamy, *op. cit.*, pp 27-34.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

## *Methods of Ideological Suppression*

METHODS of governing the thinking and behaviour of working people in the bourgeois countries form a very complex and ramified system. An important part of this system is the conditioning of man's psyche, his feelings and emotions.

Bourgeois propagandists believe that by giving free play to man's feelings and instincts they can paralyse his power of reasoning. Thus, in his *Propaganda Comes of Age*, the American sociologist M Choukas, characterises propaganda as exclusively a device for manipulation, whose inherent function is to mislead people. He bluntly states that playing on men's passions and emotions is one of the means to neutralise the ability to think, a characteristic of human being.

Another US expert on psychological warfare, P Linebarger, reasons along similar lines. He maintains that by invoking men's subconscious feelings, one can "convert lust into resentment, individual resourcefulness into mass cowardice, friction into distrust, prejudice into fury."

Bourgeois sociologists understand propaganda as influencing a person in a situation where there are conflicting points of view on the matter. Naturally, a propagandist has to devise and apply such means as will convey his position when confronted with opposing points of view. In the process, he need not necessarily be concerned about the truth or falsity of his own stand. In their view, propaganda is a sphere, having to do with the technique of influence rather than the truth of the matter.

Presentday technological advances with regard to the information media have greatly enhanced the role that information plays in the life of society and its effect on the mode of life and behaviour. In the absence of developed means of information, individual behaviour is determined principally by personal experience derived from immediate contact with, and reaction to developments. However, as the press, radio, television, cinema, etc., develop they begin to "mediate" between facts and opinion by feeding the public sifted information.

In the current stage of state-monopoly capitalism, and under the impact of scientific and technological revolution, a number of new features have emerged in the mental conditioning of masses by the ruling classes.

With the increasing interconnection of economic, political and spiritual spheres of social life, there has developed an objective growth in the role of the bourgeois state as an agent of government. In place of earlier paternalistic efforts by individual members of ruling class to take a pragmatic approach to the problem of governing men, the state has now come to the fore: besides exercising political domination, it has become a vehicle for ideological pressure on the masses. This has enabled the bourgeoisie to make its social and political manoeuvring more subtle and to combine violence and repression with demagogic social policies.

The ruling classes formerly possessed only limited means for directly influencing the masses. Today the technical potentialities for exercising their ideological and psychological conditioning have considerably expanded. New instruments for ceaseless systematic conditioning of the minds of the working people have been provided by the modern mass media—the press, radio, television, and the cinema, which are increasingly concentrated in the hands of monopolies and the state.

This method of purposeful ideological and psychological conditioning of the people is described as “manipulation” of the masses.

Bourgeois philosophers, sociologists, psychologists and politicians have frequently referred to the term “manipulation.” They describe it as a recent social phenomenon resulting from the impact of the current epoch of “mass civilisation” on the people. This impact, they say, levels out and makes uniform spiritual life of man. Some of these theorists regard manipulation as a fruitful, as well as natural, way of governing man’s thinking and behaviour in a “mass society,” and seek to justify it. Others, on the contrary, are concerned about the anti-humanistic effect of the tendency towards levelling out the personality in the modern bourgeois world, and have been searching for ways to overcome this process.

These sociologists believe that mass consumption, resulting from technological progress, is a factor behind the emergence of manipulated man. These theorists allege that consumer man is an easy target for suggestion and that he believes everything projected by the mass media; “mass man”, they state, is only capable of “chaotic impulses”, and thus has to be acted upon by means of suggestion and manipulation of his thinking.

Another factor, they say, is that the organisation of modern society along rational and technical lines gives rise to the “manipulated individual.” Man, in their opinion, becomes a mere appendage of the huge technical and bureaucratic machine, and reacts only to some particular stimuli pertaining to his immediate functions. Man’s limited use and conformism provide the basis for manipulation of his thinking and behaviour.

Some of the consequences of the consumer way of life are discussed in the writings of Herbert Marcuse, an exponent of petty-bourgeois radicalism. In social essence his concept is as far removed from Marxism as he himself is from the working class. Suffice it to say that Marcuse draws no distinction between capitalism and socialism, regarding both as varie-

ties of an "industrial society". However, one cannot deny the positive value of some aspects of his critique of "consumer capitalism". He shows that a developed capitalist society uses the growth of consumption to serve its ideological principles, which are grafted, as it were, into a specially cultivated way of life whereby man is reconciled in thought and action to reality.

There emerges a pattern of *one dimensional thought and behaviour* in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action, are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe.

The consumer attitude towards this reality and the attendant conformist trends penetrate all spheres of the life of society, throttling any effective resistance to the prevailing system. Conformism corrupts art, morals, science, philosophy, the entire cultural life and greater consumption does not

compensate for the fact that decisions over life and death, over personal and national security, are made at places over which the individuals have no control. The slaves of developed industrial civilisation are sublimated slaves, but they are slaves, for slavery is determined.

Marcuse bows to the conformist trends of "consumers' society", which he virtually regards as insurmountable. He fails to see the powerful countervailing trends, the rise of the revolutionary forces capable of leading the society beyond the bounds of capitalism. These forces appear to him to be fully "integrated" in the capitalist system. One vulnerable point of "Marcuseanism" reveals itself in connection with the subjective factor in the revolution. The ideologists of petty-bourgeois radicalism do not see the mass motive forces of social change. The last word of petty-bourgeois Left-radicalism which is trying to act independently from the main socio-political force of the epoch, the international working class, is a philosophy of pessimism.

This problem has now become even more acute. In modern industrialised capitalist society, mass production implies and creates a mass market and mass consumption, something that to a certain extent breeds political and intellectual conformism and makes the man-in-the-street more inclined to accept the slogans, images and concepts projected by the ruling circles. The struggle for a "standard of living" may well give rise to an "acquisitive complex", when possession of things becomes man's dominating goal and when he begins to attach particular value to things as symbols of their owner's status and prestige. Since mass production can function normally only when the products are standardised, man's habits, his preferences and eventually his thinking also comes to be standardised: to a certain extent standards in the economy give rise to stereotypes in mentality.

As a result of such conditioning, many people lose their independent spirit and in the socio-political and spiritual life of modern bourgeois

society come to regard themselves as "little". Through their mass media the ruling groups press upon the "little man" standard opinions of himself and of others, and stuff him with the necessary illusions. The mass media induce men to act according to prescribed schemes and stereotypes, as a result of which, to quote the US philosopher, Riesman, "inter-oriented" personality is turned into one "externally controlled" and becomes the manipulated man.

Manipulation of mass thinking is, unquestionably, a dangerous weapon of imperialism, and is part of the complex, all pervasive machinery of bourgeois monopoly rule. Despite the spiritual poverty of bourgeois system, manipulation has done much to aid the ruling circles of modern capitalist society in retaining their ideological hold over sizeable sections of working class.

The obvious impossibility of controlling society for a long time by means of barefaced coercion, the growing isolation of the ruling clique and the widening gulf between it and society, the discrediting of fascist forms of government all combined together to make the governing elite and its scholarly apologists turn to the information media as a possible way of developing what would seem to be "free" and not "imposed" inner control "of his own choosing".

Playing on human impulses and emotions is a means of neutralising man's inherent capacity to think rationally; the effectiveness of propaganda depends on how much the propagandist is able to manipulate people's behaviour, on how inconspicuous his efforts are; propaganda measures must be planned and carried out on a strictly objective basis, the propagandist remaining quite unemotional about it and serving the interest of his group, wholly unmindful of the general negative consequences of his work. What are the rules the propagandist of this sort must follow? There are several. He must advocate the particular interests of a group or class of exploiters and not of society as a whole while making it seem that interests of this particular group concur with those of society at large; the propaganda must be such that people will not see the connection between what they are incited to do and the ultimate aim of these actions, the value of "truth" should be measured not by how accurately it represents the actual facts but by the extent to which it is able to evoke the required public response.

It is easy to see that we have to contend with cynical, shrewd, well-planned and purposeful propaganda which stops at nothing.

At the same time, manipulation is a reflection of the weakness of the bourgeoisie, whose ideological influence has been dwindling and which has been compelled to seek new ways of reaching the hearts and minds of people. Manipulation also reveals that bourgeois ideology has been turning to defensive strategy. Of course, bourgeois ideologists still possess the capability to solve some short-term political and ideological problems by utilising scientific and technical achievements and instruments designed to

breed illusions and to mislead people. However, their long-term aims are doomed to bankruptcy, for they can never achieve their strategic goal of perpetuating their outdated social system and preventing its replacement by socialism and communism.

The human mind has a way of discarding the exterior of things and getting at their true character. With time illusions being spread and pressed upon people evaporate in smoke. The prominent US sociologist R Merton, admits, "We should not exaggerate the role of propaganda. In the long run no propaganda can prevail if it runs counter to events and forces underlying these events . . ."

Despite its refined methods, bourgeois propaganda has been losing out, for it has tried to go against the objective course of social development and it is in contradiction with the fundamental goals of the working class and all working people—the forces that are behind the social progress and determine it. This failure is revealed in the collapse of various bourgeois myths such as the "welfare society", "people's capitalism", and the "great society".

Manipulation can never produce any solid or lasting results since the myths and illusions it seeks to spread are in basic contradiction with realities. Life demonstrates that in every sphere—socio-economic, political and spiritual—present day capitalism continues to suppress and oppress the working people. Although self-preservation is the main objective of modern capitalism, it cannot alter its predatory exploiting nature. While seeking 'reconciliation' with the working class, the monopoly bourgeoisie is at the same time driven to seek new ways and means of intensifying its exploitation. That is why, by virtue of their social status, the working people are inevitably impelled to struggle against the exploiting class, against the bourgeoisie and its ideology.

Propaganda boomerangs when the recipient, from personal experience, finds the examples cited unmeaningful, that is, specially selected and failing to reflect the actual state of affairs.

Bourgeois sociologists centre attention upon the aspect of the "boomerang effect" which is due to technical shortcomings and errors, getting around the fundamental issue of the ideological basis of propaganda and its socio-political tendencies. Meanwhile, the trend of propaganda is resulting in a more profound "boomerang effect" than any of its "technical" blunders. The "boomerang" effect may be an expression not only of technical shortcomings but of a propaganda crisis in general.

This crisis roots in the discrepancy between the initial ideological precepts with regard to propaganda and principal tendencies of the progress of history. Ideological precepts determine the propagandist's approach to historical facts and developments, and the way in which they are interpreted and judged. Moreover, ideological precepts do not change as the socio-political situation changes. They may be modified under its impact, remaining essentially the same. Such a constant ideological

premise, for instance, is the relatively unvarying and, on the whole, negative attitude of the bourgeois press towards Soviet Union, which has persisted throughout its history, typified by appraisals of the situation in the Soviet Union, especially when Soviet people did encounter serious difficulties.

There are various ways of mitigating the boomerang effect. Propagandists realise that it takes time for propaganda forecast to be refuted or confirmed. In a concrete situation, they organise a propaganda campaign in such a way as to cause the adversary the greatest possible harm, politically and ideologically. Subsequently, propaganda flops are camouflaged by switching attention to some other issue. With the passage of time, propaganda blunders are likely to be forgotten, propaganda is directed at the unsophisticated listener and reader.

Besides switching attention, propaganda also resorts to "propaganda personification", lending a personal character to propaganda efforts serves to shift the responsibility for it from propaganda at large to a concrete individual.

The bourgeoisie has now adopted refined methods of manipulating mass thinking and spiritually oppressing people as major instruments in its struggle against socialism and for the preservation of the capitalist system.

V A GAITONDE

## *Manpower Planning in India*

PLANNING is deliberate action based on objective situations to achieve calculated ends. The major elements of economic planning of a nation are its physical and human resources and it is the inter play between the two that is deliberately planned. So planning the use of human resources is as important as that of the physical resources; also, when resources are limited planning has to be organised on a scientific basis. While India's physical resources are obviously limited, our planners did not come up against scarcity of human resources which, to them, warranted any planning. With a huge army of unemployed and under employed manpower anything like a labour plan was considered superfluous. So there was no comprehensive manpower programme in the Indian plans; in its place, we had merely a few projections of employment potential. However, in certain specific areas, manpower resources were considered inadequate and deliberate measures taken to fill the gaps. Engineers, technicians, scientists, doctors, veterinary and agricultural experts, are some of the professional occupations in which a certain amount of manpower planning was adopted in the past. This note deals specifically with aspects of planning for engineers, both graduates and diploma-holders.

The first part of this note contains an account and an assessment of the manpower planning techniques applied in the last four Five-Year Plans. The second part is devoted to an alternative approach to manpower planning and employment.

### I

Engineers are the products of social investment in education and training. This is why unemployment and underemployment among them gets wide publicity and becomes a matter of public concern. (Though unemployment among the unskilled should also be viewed from the same stand point, because it is society that supports them, it is seldom viewed in that way).

Unemployment among engineers is nothing new. During the decade 1955-1965, six to seven per cent of the engineers were out of work, as shown in Table I.

TABLE I

ESTIMATES OF UNEMPLOYED ENGINEERS (DEGREE AND DIPLOMA)—  
1955 TO 1968

(in '000s)

Year	TOTAL			DEGREE			DIPLOMA		
	Stock	Unem- ployed	Per- cent	Stock	Unem- ployed	Per- cent	Stock	Unem- ployed	Per- cent
1955	74.0	4.8	6.1	34.0	0.6	1.7	45.0	4.2	9.4
1960	13.3	9.1	6.8	58.0	1.1	1.9	75.0	8.0	10.7
1965	229.3	16.5	7.2	95.5	3.1	3.3	133.8	13.4	10.0
1966	259.9	27.6	10.6	106.6	4.0	3.7	153.3	23.6	15.4
1967	294.4	40.0	13.6	119.0	6.5	5.5	175.4	33.5	19.1
1968	332.0	56.7	17.1	134.0	10.0	7.5	198.0	46.7	23.6

Source: Institute of Applied Manpower Research, *Fact Book on Manpower*, Part III.

Certainly something had gone wrong. Either production was more than planned or estimated demand exceeded actual demand. We shall presently look into this.

### *First Plan*

The First Plan was more of a budgetary exercise extrapolated for five years rather than a scientifically consistent and integrated plan. Even such an exercise was not there as far as engineering manpower was concerned. It was considered that a consolidation of the then existing training capacities could be sufficient to meet the demands generated during the course of the Plan. Nobody even knew how to calculate engineering manpower requirements. All the same, there was neither shortage nor a sizeable surplus of engineers by the end of the First Plan. In 1955 as seen in Table I, about 6 per cent of the total number of engineers were unemployed. Shortage in specific categories also were reported.

### *Second Plan*

The original Second Plan document suggested that the annual intake of students for engineering degree course should be raised to 75,550 and for diploma courses to 11,300 in order to meet the demand.<sup>1</sup> The Engineering Personnel Committee appointed in September 1955 estimated the total additional demand for the Second Plan as 30,000 degree engineers and 52,000 diploma engineers, and reported that even if the targets of the Second Plan document were realized there would be a large shortage of degree and diploma engineers of all branches—1800 graduates and 8000 diplomas.<sup>2</sup> To meet this demand they suggested the starting of 18 new engineering colleges and 62 new polytechnics with an intake capacity of 2794 and 8221 respectively.<sup>3</sup> The Ghosh-Chandrakant Commission, which was appointed to study these recommendations, made an estimate of requirements which was slightly lower than that of the Engi-

neering Personnel Committee; instead of starting too many new colleges it recommended the establishment of only three more colleges (with an addition of 2562 seats) and the expansion of facilities in the existing 19 colleges. However, by the time the Second Plan ended, several new colleges originally not scheduled were started and the admission capacity rose from the targeted figure of 10,000 to nearly 13,860. Yet the output rate at the end of the Plan was only 5700 and there was no increase in the overall figure. The total stock of engineers at the end of the Plan was about 58,000 graduates and 75,000 diploma-holders.

### *Third Plan*

The Third Plan estimated the additional requirements of graduate engineers during the plan period as 51,000 and recommended that the annual intake capacity be increased from 13,860 to 19,140 by 1964-65.<sup>4</sup> Later, the Working Group on Technical Education and Vocational Training estimated the demand as 45,000 degree engineers besides about 2500 AMIE and 51,000 diploma holders.<sup>5</sup>

Just after the India-China conflict a series of hurried decisions were taken. It was said that

technical education is an essential part of defence effort and therefore should be given the same priority and urgency in the national development as is being given to the conventional aspects of defence training and defence equipment.<sup>6</sup>

So in 1962 the targeted in-take to degree courses was increased from 19,140 to 25,000 by 1964-65. It is interesting to note that the 74th Report of the Estimates Committee forecast that in 1964-65, there would be a continued shortage of engineers despite the growth in training facilities.

Table II gives the targets and achievements regarding the supply of graduate engineers for the first three plans. It can be seen that the achievements have never gone beyond targets—the supply was never more than projected demands. But in the ensuing two years unemployment among graduate engineers doubled, causing deep concern among engineering students all over the country. In 1967 when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi began to give the Convocation Address at Roorkee University the students shouted in unison “Give us a job, not a degree” and walked out. As it turned out, the planners became so confused that for the Fourth Five Year Plan which began after a three year plan holiday, they refused to give any forecast of engineering manpower requirements. All that they had to say was:

The existing facilities for engineering education should be sufficient to meet the Fourth and Fifth Plan requirements. No shortages are expected. The problem will be primarily of effective deployment and effective utilization of persons trained.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, estimates for utilization of engineering man-power in 1965 will do for 1979, the end of the Fifth Plan! The questions naturally arise, where have our planners gone wrong? How and why?

TABLE II

ESTIMATED DEMAND AND ACTUAL SUPPLY OF  
ENGINEERS DURING SECOND AND THIRD PLANS

	FIRST PLAN		SECOND PLAN		THIRD PLAN	
	DEMAND	SUPPLY	DEMAND	SUPPLY	DEMAND	SUPPLY
Additional engineers	..	..	29400	24700	51000	44500
Intake	..	5890	7550 (9850)	13860	19140 (25000)	24695
Output	..	4020	4600	5700	12000	10282
Additional institutions	..	15	33	37	17	31

Source: Shikego M Asher, "Engineering Manpower Planning and Unemployment"  
*Manpower Journal* Vol. VII, No. 3, October and December 1972.

*Planning Technique*

Manpower planning is a complicated process especially under conditions of a loosely planned economy. Philosophies of planning also are many and varied. These can be basically classified into two: economic approach and manpower requirement approach. Under the first approach, the cost-benefit or rate-of-return aspects of training and employment form the decisive factor in plan formulation. Under the second approach, the number of persons required to carry out a given task is assessed and planning is done accordingly. Indian planners adopted the latter approach. Though this is an inadequate instrument of planning education in an economic sense, there was no alternative under Indian conditions.

The manpower-requirement approach predicts the requirement at a future date as the sum of (i) current employment (ii) currently unfilled positions (iii) future needs. Current employment position is easily known. Currently unfilled positions also can be reckoned. The crux of the problem lies in the estimation of future needs. It must take into account the sectoral relationships within the economy: among agriculture, mining, manufacture, construction, services, research and development and so on. It must also take into account the structure of employment within each sector, for example, the number of people engaged in research and development, design, construction operation, management and so on; the effects of new scientific and technical developments which will alter elasticity of substitution between capital and labour, requirement of skilled and unskilled manpower, productivity etc. Such detailed analysis is inherently very complicated, and in some instances next to impossible and so was far beyond the scope of Indian planning. The methodology adopted therefore, was of a consolidated, 'global', type. Three independent ratios were used to arrive at the manpower demand: (a) the investment to personnel ratio (IPR); (b) the output to personnel ratio (OPR); and, (c) the total employment to personnel ratio (TEPR).

The first ratio, IPR, gives the total employment as a function of the total productive investment or expenditure in a particular cadre. In the second, OPR instead of investment, the value of output is used to define the employment quantum and structure. In the third, TEPR it is assumed that employment in each category will be a fixed percentage of the total employment. In each case the ratio is taken as constant. It appears that the Planning Commission did not make any manpower study on its own. The Second Plan relied on the study made by the Engineering Personnel Committee (EPC) which employed all the three methods. It assumed full regional mobility of technical manpower and no major change in the structural pattern of employment of technical personnel. After consulting the ministries on the anticipated expenditure, the EPC examined the past trend in the work load and personnel requirement to work out the IPR. This method was applied to road and building construction and irrigation. The OPR was used in the field of machinery and manufacture using relatively fewer engineers. For estimating the manpower requirements of the Third Plan, the Working Group on Technical Education and Vocational Training also used the same three methods. Given below are some of the quantitative relations used in the various calculations:

- 1 Output of engineers 85 per cent of the enrolment during the previous four years.
- 2 Investment of Rs 10,000 crores creates an additional employment of 101 lakhs.
- 3 1 per cent of total employment is engineers.
- 4 Ratio of graduate engineers to diploma holders is about 1:1.7.
- 5 24,000 engineers will be required for an investment of Rs 2000 crores.

These figures are not mutually consistent. Also, one does not know on what basis these figures are arrived at. Apparently, the ratios were obtained from the prevailing investment, output and employment structure. This means that the prevailing structure is considered optimal and that no major change in it is expected. We shall discuss later why this is wrong. Only a meagre fraction of the estimate has any reasonable basis. The rest are shots in the dark, statistical basis for cross-checking being totally inadequate. As a result, the M L Dantwala Committee of Experts on Unemployment Estimates, says in its report,

"We are unable to suggest any methods that would significantly improve such estimates in the short, medium run, for the economy as a whole."<sup>8</sup>

This summarises what the Planning Commission has been able to do. The IPR, OPR and TEPR have some inherent drawbacks. For example, the Third Plan initially estimated a total requirement of 120,000 engineers (50,000 degree and 70,000 diploma) on the basis of an investment of Rs 10,000 crores (Rs 7,000 crores in the public sector and

Rs 3,000 crores in private sector). Later investment in the public sector was increased to Rs 8,000 crores and the target for engineers was raised immediately by 12,000. The fact that the increase in investment came due to increase in operational costs without any effect on output or employment was totally neglected. Similarly the criterion of National Product is not sufficient to judge employment potential in a country like India, where agriculture, though constituting nearly 50 per cent of the national product, has only a meagre demand for engineers. There was also misjudgement about employment in private industry. It was assumed that private industry would be employing more and more graduate engineers. But Indian industry continued to employ a small number of graduate engineers because they found it more economical to adopt foreign technology and knowledge. This we will have occasion to discuss in greater detail later.

Some agencies other than government were also interested in manpower problems. The Institute of Applied Manpower Research is the most important among them. It conducted several global studies on a two sector (agriculture and non-agriculture) and multi-sector basis. Results of the multi-sectoral studies and a comparison with the Government studies are given in Table III. It is very difficult to compare the results and reason out the differences. Why, for example, do the estimates of IAMR based on total employment (labour force) to engineering personnel give consistently lower values than those based on IPR and OPR, whereas the government estimates show just the reverse? We are at a loss why IAMR estimates are 20 to 30 per cent lower than government estimates and why

TABLE III  
GLOBAL COMPARISON OF ESTIMATED REQUIREMENT OF ENGINEERS BY  
DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS AND APPROACHES (in '000s)

	In 1970 based on			In 1975 based on			
	OPR	IPR	TEPR	OPR	IPR	TEPR	
Multisectoral							
Approach-IAMR		403	411	356	703	676	521
Two Sector-IAMR		395	354	341	694	650	486
Global - IAMR		371	325	333	615	581	470
Planning Commission, Directorate of Manpower		420	422	NA	720	NA	NA
Ministry of Education, Working Group of Technical Education and Vocational Training		NA	440	450	NA	NA	NA

Source : Institute of Applied Manpower Research, *A Sectoral Study of Engineering Manpower*, p 29.

multisectoral approach gives higher values than global or two-sector approaches. Judging from results, it may appear at first sight that IAMR estimate was closer to reality than the government's. However, one has to consider that while the government estimates were made in 1960-61 the IAMR estimates were made in 1966-67 from the experience of a downward trend in employment under the gathering momentum of the recession. Needless to say, all these make one sceptical of the value of the models used.

We can say confidently that overproduction of engineers is not the reason for the present level of unemployment. As far as the government is concerned it has one standard explanation:

The technically qualified personnel presented no serious problem of employment until about the end of the third plan. However, as a result of serious setback in the mid-sixties in investment and growth, particularly in industry and mining, there was a sharp fall in the demand for technical personnel.<sup>9</sup>

Let us see whether this argument is tenable or not. We shall consider the three year plan holiday period 1966-1969. The total stock of engineers (degree and diploma) on December 31, 1965 was 229,300 of which 16,500 were unemployed. So employment on 31 December, 1965 was 212,800. The sanctioned intake capacity (and actual intake too) in 1965 was 25,000 for degrees and 48,000 for diplomas. Had there been no unexpected setback in the economy, admissions would have continued in the same manner and the total stock of engineers would have risen to  $229,300 + 0.85(48,000 + 25,000) \times 3 = 415,450$ . Against this the actual increase was only 332,000 of which 56,700 were employed leaving an unemployment position of 275,300. So the actual increase in employment was 62,500 against the anticipated increase of 186,150. If this is attributed to shortfalls in investment then we have to conclude that the actual investment was only a third of the anticipated investment or Rs 5,200 crores as against Rs 15,510 crores. The actual investment of Rs 10,000 to 11,000 crores (public sector 6756 crores + private sector 4200 crores approximately = total 11,000 crores) ought to have created an additional employment of 120,000 to 130,000 jobs for engineers. So the shortfall cannot be attributed to fall in investment alone: why a recession in the economy should have more than a proportionate effect on engineering employment potential is the question which is examined in the next section.

## II

To answer this question we should take a closer look at the character of Indian industry. Indian industry is increasingly becoming dependent on foreign technical and financial collaboration. This is significant because it determines the structure of employment and training of engineers. Technical personnel can be broadly classified into four tiers: craftsman/skilled worker, junior technician, senior technician and the engineer-scientist.

The craftsman/skilled worker is primarily geared to the rural sector which at present is run on hereditary lines. The junior technicians are the community of industrial workers with advanced skills in modern trades. They are trained in various trade schools, industrial training institutes and factories. Senior technicians are those with sufficient skill for their profession and also competent to innovate and to act as group leaders. This corresponds to (or is expected to correspond to) our diploma engineers. The engineer-scientist (graduate engineer) is, essentially, a problem-solver and creator. He has often to undertake research and development work, design equipments, foresee future possibilities of various processes and materials, organize and manage industry and so on. Whether the training given at our engineering degree institutions is enough to enable him to shoulder these responsibilities is another question.

Neither the engineering education and training nor research and development are mechanical switching-off-and-on-type processes. They form part of an innovative chain—research, development, design, tooling, production and marketing of the new product. There cannot be any improvement without feed-back at each stage. Modern industry in India being largely based on foreign collaboration, innovation is a term alien to it. Attempts to promote indigenously developed designs and processes have consistently failed. The industry enjoys a sellers' market within the country and has absolutely no compulsion to either strain for indigenous research development or to take even the slightest risk in employing local knowhow. Applied science and technology cannot grow without application. Engineers cannot go on solving problems on paper; the problem-solving process is complete only with the marketing of the new products. This being impossible in India, technical education never rose to the standards expected to achieve what it is expected to do, namely creation of wealth.

As indicated, graduate engineer-scientists are essentially problem-solvers and innovators. This will be reflected in their employment pattern too. For instance in the USSR in 1965 engineers employed in research and development work were nearly 45 per cent of the total number of engineers. The number of engineers engaged in projects and design (excluding R and D) was 11 per cent of the total. Thus R and D and Design together utilizes 55 to 56 per cent of the total engineering manpower. Such a detailed breakup is not available for India. Table IV gives the approximate employment of engineers (degree and diploma) by industrial sector in India in 1960-61 and 1964-65.

The total number of engineers working on R and D and Design cannot be seen from this table. However there is some evidence to indicate that the total number of engineers (degree and diploma) employed in R and D and Design efforts may be 2 to 3 per cent.<sup>10</sup>

Another revealing comparison is the ratio of the R and D personnel (all categories) to total working population. Table V gives the total num-

TABLE IV

APPROXIMATE EMPLOYMENT OF ENGINEERS (DEGREE AND DIPLOMA)  
BY INDUSTRIAL SECTOR IN INDIA, 1960-61, 1964-65

Industrial Sector	1960-61	1964-65
Mining and Manufacturing	42,000	74,000
Construction	20,000	27,000
Trade and Commerce	5,000	9,000
Transport and Communication	10,000	14,000
Education	12,000	25,000
Government Administration	32,000	40,000
Other Services	11,000	17,000
Agriculture	1,000	10,500
Total	133,000	2,16,500

Source: Institute of Applied Manpower Research, *Factbook on Manpower*, Part III.

ber of personnel employed in R and D work, total population, total working population and number of R and D personnel per thousand workers in USA, USSR and selected countries in Western Europe.<sup>11</sup>

TABLE V

ESTIMATED MANPOWER ENGAGED IN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT  
WORK IN USA, USSR AND WESTERN EUROPE, 1962

	Total R & D Personnel ('000)	Total Popu- lation (million)	Working Population (million)	R & D Per- sonnel per 1000 workers
USA	1,159.5	186.6	11.2	10.4
Belgium	21.0	9.2	6.0	3.5
France	11.2	47.0	29.1	3.8
Germany	142.2	54.7	36.7	3.9
Netherlands	32.8	11.8	7.3	4.5
UK	211.1	53.4	34.8	6.1
USSR	1,472.0	220.0	142.0	10.4
India (a) (1968-69)	62.0	527.0	227 <sup>(b)</sup>	0.27

(a) *Fourth Five Year Plan*.

(b) Estimated, using the same ratio of workers to non-workers as in 1961.

Similar figures for India are given above. Whereas in USA and USSR the number of R and D personnel per 1000 workers is 10.4 the figure for India is 0.27.

The general conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing analysis is that the structure of employment of our engineers is highly distorted in comparison with the training given to them. Equally important is the pro-

portion of various technical skills. The present ratio of degree to diploma engineers is 1 : 1.7. There is too high a proportion of graduate engineers.

The training given to graduate engineers is to enable them to take up the responsibilities of research, development, design and management. In India there is very little scope for any of these things. As a result, graduate engineers are often employed in places which demand only diploma engineers. Further down the ladder, the diploma holders replace junior technicians; in the scramble many get in, many more are left behind.

The majority of positions held by graduate engineers today can be manned by diploma holders. For example, all the posts of junior engineers in Electricity Boards, Public Works Departments etc., can be filled by diploma holders. Consequently, the technical personnel in India are grossly underemployed. The industries utilize the services of graduate engineers where diploma engineers would have sufficed, only because they are so cheaply available and because they add to the prestige of the firm. But at the slightest jolt to the economy, they cast off the redundant personnel. The industry can run with operational personnel and can easily do without engineer-scientists. This is the main reason why the recession of 1966-68 caused a disproportionate reduction in employment potential. Profit-conscious private industry is not keen on complying with the Planning Commission's projections and platitudes.

Today apparently unemployment among diploma holders is more acute than among degree holders and unemployment among junior technicians (ITI, JTCs etc.) more than among diploma holders. The reason is the persisting underemployment. Today we do not have any opportunity to place our engineers in the jobs for which they are trained. This is true of the science graduates also.

So long as our economy, especially, the industrial sector, remains heavily based on foreign technical collaboration there is no solution to the problem. Unemployment will not only continue to exist but will increase. A change in policy has become imperative not only from employment considerations, but also in the larger interests of the national economy.

It is only in the socialist countries that economic planning and its component, manpower planning are done scientifically. Advanced capitalist countries also make estimates of manpower needs. However, there is a basic difference between the approaches. In socialist countries the full labour power is already being utilized; what is planned is the utilization of this labour power at a higher level of technology and efficiency and the sectoral redistribution in accordance with the set economic goals. In capitalist countries, on the other hand, manpower 'needs' are estimated according to projected growth rate and pattern. The main objective of such studies is to provide for the necessary training facilities. What was attempted in India also was not different. The difference lies only in the total unreliability of the data on the existing situation and of the projected rate and pattern of growth.

In a study, for the USA the employment estimates were prepared by means of input-output analysis.<sup>12</sup> First, the expenditure on each goal was translated into a bill of goods specifying the purchases (at 1958 prices) from each of the 80-odd industries into which the entire economy was divided. The gross output from each industry that is required to produce the goods and services represented by the purchases was estimated and the value added by each industry in the process of producing this gross output was determined. The employment projections for specific goals were then derived from the relationship between value added and employment in these industries in the past decade and the changes anticipated in this relationship because of productivity changes in the next decade.

By itself this analysis provides no indication of the occupational distribution of employment. The projections of manpower requirements by occupation were based on the historical changes in the occupational distribution in each industry between 1950-1964 and on the judgement derived from the available evidence concerning the probable changes in the occupational distribution in the next decade. Occupational distributions have been prepared for individual industries based on 1950 and 1960 decennial census. These distributions indicate the frequency per 1000 people employed with which each of the occupations occur in the industries concerned. The 1950-1960 data is carried forward to 1964 and checked with actuals and again rechecked in 1965.

As far as the Soviet Union is concerned the 'labour plan' is a part of the national economic plan. It is called upon to "ensure the full employment of the able-bodied population as well as the manpower needs of the economy."<sup>13</sup> It has to ensure the steady and swift growth of labour productivity; increase in the number of people employed in the economy; extension and improvement of training of skilled personnel; and rise in wages.

We in India, obviously, cannot think of any such comprehensive plan under the present socio-economic set up. Our plans are, by and large, statements of desirable objectives. Plans are only formulated, and not implemented; the experience of four five year plans and three annual plans has amply proved this. The activities of a hundred and odd profit oriented industrial houses are not amenable to any sort of mathematical analysis. To elaborate a labour plan based on such an economic plan is, to say the least, a wasteful exercise. The only way to make planning effective is to make it scientific and total. This would, amongst other steps, involve nationalization of all foreign companies, of all big Indian enterprises, foreign trade, of technical collaboration agreements, abrogation of patents and so on. These steps would however, demand a drastic change in our socio-economic system. It is doubtful if our academic economists and planners are ready for it.

M P PARAMESWARAN

<sup>1</sup> Planning Commission, *Second Five Year Plan*, 1956, p 515.

Planning Commission, Report of the *Engineering Personnel Committee*, Eastern Exchange Press, 1956, p 67.

- <sup>3</sup> Ministry of Education, *Scientific Research and Technical Education*, Estimates Committee, 10th Report, p 14.
- <sup>4</sup> Planning Commission, *Third Five Year Plan*, p 171.
- <sup>5</sup> *Report of the Working Group on Technical Education and Vocational Training*, pp 44-47.
- <sup>6</sup> All India Committee on Technical Education, Ministry of Education, *Proceeding of the 16th Meeting*, pp 45-46.
- <sup>7</sup> Planning Commission, *Fourth Five Year Plan*, p 370.
- <sup>8</sup> Planning Commission, *Report of the Committee of Experts on Unemployment Estimates 1970*, p 27.
- <sup>9</sup> Planning Commission, *The Fourth Plan, Mid-term Appraisal*, February 1972, p 44.
- <sup>10</sup> Institute of Applied Manpower Research, *Factbook on Manpower*, Part III.
- <sup>11</sup> Freeman and Young, *The Research and Development Effort in Western Europe, North America and the Soviet Union*, OECD, Paris 1965, p 72.
- <sup>12</sup> Leonard A Lecht, *Manpower Needs for National Goals in the 1970s*.
- <sup>13</sup> *Soviet Planning, Principles and Techniques*, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1972.

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Review Article*

### *Social and Anthropological Research*

A SURVEY OF RESEARCH IN SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY, Vol III, Indian Council of Social Science Research, 1972, pp 335, Rs 30.

THIS volume gives a good idea of the scope, setting and theoretical possibilities of the 'official' sciences and is an excellent example of how, far from being 'value free,' such state-backed academic efforts are not only partial to the classes that control the state but also consciously omit works that reflect the ideology of classes opposed to them.

The fields of sociology and social anthropology are particularly susceptible to this kind of distortion, especially as these academic disciplines as taught at universities in capitalist countries today were created to counteract the progress of Marxism Leninism, the ideology of the working class, in order to defend capitalism in its reactionary phase, imperialism.

The survey of "Tribal Ethnography in India" by L P Vidyarthi in this volume illustrates this point. He has categorised the development of tribal studies in three phases: formative (1774-1919), constructive (1920-1949) and analytical (1950-). In fact, a closer look reveals only two phases: British and American. The first two 'phases' are really one, and Vidyarthi points out,

Indian anthropology, which was born and brought up under the influence of British anthropology, matured during the constructive phase also on the lines of British anthropology (p 39).

Further, the first 'phase' is really not Indian at all, as only one Indian anthropologist, S C Roy, appears at the tail end of it, in 1912. His major works then fall into the next period. Looking more closely, it is found that major serious attempts to study tribes are after 1850, as may be seen in the increase in the number of journals on such studies. *The*

*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* was established in 1784, and for a hundred years remained the only such journal in India. But between 1872 and 1921, we get three major ventures, *Indian Antiquary*, *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society* and *Man in India* (p 37). Also it was during the second phase that the indigenous base for such studies was established with their inclusion in the curricula of two universities, Bombay (Sociology in 1919) and Calcutta (Anthropology in 1921).

The second phase commenced after the second world war and particularly after Independence, when "there was a positive increase in contacts with American social anthropologists" who

created an atmosphere first, for a systematic study of Indian villages with a view to testing certain hypotheses, second, for refining some of the methodological framework developed elsewhere and third, to assist the Community Development Programmes in the Indian villages (p 39).

Thus we find that not only do anthropology and sociology in India follow in the footsteps of the models provided by the imperialist world, but also that the development of the official branches of these sciences reflect the changing pattern of dominance of world imperialism over the years.

However, to see the official brands of Indian sociology and anthropology as a mechanical reflexion of the imperialist brand would be oversimplifying the complex reality. These 'sciences' at the hands of the Indian ruling class, exhibit an eclecticism of their own. Vidyarthi, for example, notes that,

the coexistence of all the three phases with different emphasis of compilation of glossary about tribes and castes of the formative period, monographic and descriptive studies of the constructive period—is also evident in the contemporary tribal research conducted in different parts of India (p 37).

On the other hand, D N Majumdar points out that, "social anthropology in India has not kept pace with the development in England, in the European continent or in America" (p 34).

G V Plekhanov points out that while every society has a general social and historical environment which influences its development,

*every society lives in its own particular historical environment, which may be, and very often is, in reality very similar to the historical environment surrounding other nations and peoples, but can never be, and never is, identical with it.*<sup>1</sup>

Thus, while the Indian bourgeoisie relies for its theoretical framework on world imperialism, its ideology also reflects its late emergence resulting in modification of pre-capitalist forms rather than their overthrow, as in the case of the 'coexistence' of phases Vidyarthi speaks of. The continued existence of historically obsolete with the most 'modern' subjects of research is a result of precisely this process in the ideological field. Yet, from the early years of the century, it no longer relied on direct borrow-

wings from imperialist ideologists, but set its own ideologues to work within the broader context of imperialist ideology. It is only from this perspective that we can understand the total reliance of Indian anthropologists and sociologists of the official variety on the imperialist models (first British, then American) on the one hand, alongside the recognition of the danger of "academic colonialism" of the Project Camelot variety (p 289). This has already been thoroughly exposed by Gough, Berreman and Frank, and by itself constitutes no more than the pious strictures of the Indian Government against the CIA without the slightest effort at curbing its activities in India. Moreover as L K Mahapatra puts it,

theories, insights and institutions developed in the West have supplied, broadly speaking not only the guidelines but also the motive force in undertaking research. *Stimulus diffusion from the West however, will aid the process of creativity in research only when the foreign ready made products are not accepted as models for mass-production here (p 17).* (Italics mine).

What then, are the theories that this class vulgarizes as science? In the field of culture, instead of stressing change and development and transformation of the frontiers of peoples' experience, Milton Singer, one of the chief American mentors of Indian anthropology, provides a static perspective by concentrating on "a generic structure of persisting relations among media, texts, themes and cultural centres" in imitation of the Radcliffe-Brownian abstraction of a homeostatic society described in terms of a "generic social structure of persisting relations among roles and statuses" (p 3).

This conservatism finds more obvious expression in the identification of the culture of a pre-existing ruling class as the 'Great tradition', which with revivalist overtones, becomes M N Srinivas' 'Sanskritization'. However, given the multi-national nature of the Indian ruling class, such a narrow identification could clearly not last for long and a host of other 'great' elements appear in the guise of 'Islamization', 'Tribalization' etc. Change, clearly is seen as emerging only through the agency and in the idiom of the ruling class, with its twin avenues of revivalism and Westernization which is unscientifically equated with 'modernization', as in the following quote of Prof Mahapatra:

Sanskritization is of the same order as Brahmanisation or Kulinisation and is mainly conceived of as one phase of the cyclical process of change, the other correlated phase being de-Sanskritization. However Modernization (or Westernization) may be conceived of as a linear change from a traditional phase of culture to a new irreversible form (p 9).

Obviously the possibility of developing the democratic elements of indigenous culture into a genuine socialist culture of the masses is completely ruled out.

This is not inconsistent with the passive role ascribed to the masses by another American mentor of 'official' anthropologists, McKim Marriott,

who sees cultural change as follows :

first, communication is intensified, one way, from higher to lower levels of culture...(then) popular needs begin to work changes in the contents and form of the higher cultural levels themselves, selecting and condensing materials suitable for mass-dissemination as a part of a new democratic national culture(p 5).

The implicit passive role to be played by the masses is given unambiguous expression by D Narain who has depicted "the Hindu character as passive, depressive, dependent, mild etc. as against the English character which is aggressive." The fact that such studies are of no scientific value and purely *a priori* is evident from the fact that "no attempt...was made to check these personality characteristics against any life histories, interviews or psychological tests" (p 11). This is not surprising as the whole history of revolt and reform in India would point to exactly the opposite of what Narain would like us to believe. But a ruling class sitting on a crisis-ridden state needs ideologists who can represent changes being forced on it by the masses as concessions given to them.

Even the study of folk-lore is accepted as a concession to reality; folk lore and folk culture continue to be rigorous in India, as we can see from Indra Deva's assessment of present revivalist trends as resulting from the fact that,

the limitations of rationalism are widely recognized. Numerous ideological movements emphasize the value of cooperation and security. This is not to say that the modern elite are going back to values of the folk communities. They, however, do not harbour the self-righteous indignation which impelled their predecessors to combat and suppress folk values. Under these changed material and ideological circumstances, it is not impossible that folk forms find certain avenues of survival and growth (p 210).

Of course, he does not even consider the possibility of the transformation of folk forms and their genuine development in states progressing to socialism under the leadership of the working-class.

However, in the face of a growing crisis, the theoretical bankruptcy of the official scientist is clearly reflected in the following:

The entire structure can be conceptualized as the outcome of a number of abortive social changes or as the mark of failure of the new to cut off the umbilical cord of the past. For instance, in the changed context, the old village ties have been dysfunctional; but they are still continuing. The ties on the basis of caste and community affiliations have become irrelevant but they are continuing. The ties on the basis of factionalism of the old village have lost their meaning, but still they are very much there. Taken separately all these traits can be considered to be symptoms of cultural lethargy; but taken together, they serve a very important function—the function of reducing the harmful effect of each of them, in isolation.

Hence, though separately each of them is a symbol of the past, jointly they constitute a prop for the new (p 68).

What, in fact, such a position implies, is a retreat from reason and reality; it results in the continued refusal to study the real problems of people as obvious from the fact that it is precisely material culture studies that are neglected. And one of the authors of this volume is forced to admit that:

The situation in this regard in the universities is indeed distressing. No university department of sociology teaches material culture at any stage in sociological studies. From the 1969 M A courses in anthropology prescribed in different universities of India, it appears that, apart from Calcutta, Gauhati, Utkal, Delhi or Lucknow, no university in India teaches material culture to its students. Even in the universities where material culture is being taught the items considered for teaching are mostly the same which were taught nearly half a century ago and their emphasis continues to be on the material culture of the primitive people (pp 164-165).

It is obvious that there is a theoretical blindspot. There is a consistent avoidance of authors from socialist countries. This is not merely a question of language, since the writer of the article on material culture ignores the contribution of Karl Marx and Lewis H Morgan in this field. And what is more, that seminal mind whose grasp of Indian culture has left a lasting mark on any aspect of its study, D D Kosambi, does not find a single mention in any of the bibliographies. Therefore, if it is neither a question of language nor ignorance of sources, it must be a definite attempt to suppress the main avenue of science—science in the interest of the people, science from a Marxist—Leninist perspective. This retreat from reason and suppression of the materialist approach is not accidental. It has a very practical purpose, as expressed by S C Dube, who views the role of social scientists as analysts and not as therapists. Such a position represents a return to a point much further back than Marx's theses on Feuerbach, which clearly stated that the point was not to reinterpret society but to change it. It is a convenient position for official opportunists but one untenable from the contemporary scientific standpoint, which holds that,

if we have a correct theory but merely prate about it, pigeon-hole it and do not put it into practice, then that theory however good, is of no significance. Knowledge begins with practice, and theoretical knowledge is acquired through practice and must then return to practice. The active function of knowledge manifests itself not only in the active leap from perceptual to rational knowledge, but . . . it must manifest itself in the leap from rational knowledge to revolutionary practice. The knowledge which grasps the laws of the world, must be redirected to the practice of changing the world, must be applied anew in the practice of production, in the practice of revolutionary

class-struggle and revolutionary national struggle and in the practice of scientific experiment . . . The problem of whether theory corresponds to objective reality is not, and cannot be, completely solved in the movement of knowledge from the perceptual to the rational . . . The only way to solve this problem completely is to redirect rational knowledge to social practice, apply theory to practice and see whether it can achieve the objectives one has in mind.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore it is very essential to evolve a scientific method of defeating the official sociologists *in practice*. In this respect we must be aware of the importance of material culture studies as well as a sustained campaign to prevent the state and its numerous so-called autonomous agencies like the Indian Council of Social Science Research, and Indian Council of Historical Research from giving grants to only those scholars and institutions who are in line with the official research. Above all, it is important to note that these institutions have a political purpose backed by the state funds and dictated by the class that controls state machinery. Without explicitly identifying ourselves with the interests of the toiling masses, not only are radical intellectuals unable to avail of correctives, but are also incapable of advancing the cause of genuine science.

SUNIT CHOPRA

<sup>1</sup> G V Plekhanov, *The Development of the Marxist View of History*, p 179.

<sup>2</sup> Mao Tse Tung, *On Practice*, July 1937.

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# Social Scientist

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Anglian Novel □ Sociological Ideas of  
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### FROM THE EDITOR

*With deep regret we inform our readers the sad demise of Premendra, on June 11th, who was with us in the editorial staff of the Social Scientist from its inception.*

K SESHADRI

## *Mass Political Participation and Democracy*

THE concept of participation is once again receiving a lot of attention, as the mechanisms provided in the bourgeois political structure are proving inadequate to satisfy the aspirations for a new social structure and to voice the discontent against the existing one. The 'liberal' democracy to which the western nations paid such homage has proved itself to be an apology and a justification for the *status quo* in social relations created by the industrial civilization wherein only a few elites could assume the role of all-knowing representatives of the masses who by and large are apathetic to the intricate process of decision-making. Basing their observation on normal times, some of the Western apologists of 'apathy,' postulated apathy itself as an essential condition for the working of democracy.<sup>1</sup> It is true that people do not always participate, but when crucial issues are thrown into the fore, participation of the masses always takes place. With the advent of greater education and the increasing discontent caused by industrialisation more and more people want to have a greater share in the decision-making process. Participation has assumed a greater significance today in the context of the 'New Left' movements, particularly in France, and the popular acceptance of 'participatory democracy' as being something more than democracy in the liberal sense of the term.

The Western political scientists imply by 'participation' all

activities that support the system including those which may be temporarily opposed to the ruling party or elite while any action of the masses to upset the whole 'apple cart' is 'mass action'. The first is democratic and the second is totalitarian in its potentiality and hence has to be avoided.

Many political theorists of the West have also argued that since it is impossible for everybody to compete, all that is necessary is to create the conditions whereby citizens are empowered to participate in the elections to choose their representatives. After having elected their representatives there is no need for further participation by the people because the elected representatives or the elites should be given sufficient elbowroom for adjustments and manoeuvre. After all, democracy is a matter of adjustment, peaceful settlement of differences, consensus-building and conflict-resolution on the basis of 'give and take.' To be sure, the architectonics of politics is based on the theory that underneath the surface of any society there lies a wide area of consensus as generally manifested in the constitution or such other instrument. All the conflicts and differences are only on the surface and these are naturally resolved by the institutionalised 'legal' methods. For this type of democratic resolution of 'conflicts' the participation that is necessary is only the minimal one of supporting the 'system.' In fact, as is argued by some, it is necessary that there should be a certain amount of apathy and indifference.<sup>2</sup> (Sweet are the uses of adversity!) Only under such conditions can the elite successfully work the system. Too much of participation leads to mass society which, in turn, leads to the establishment of totalitarianism. This is a perverted view of the 'masses' and their role in the making of history. As long as the masses are the objects of history because of their apathy, poverty and hence an apolitical attitude, which is what they naturally will exhibit in certain societies, and at certain periods, the elites will play their part. It is not intended here to go back to the age-old controversy starting from Plutarch, regarding the role of heroes in history, to Thomas Carlyle, Charles Kingsley and H W C Davis.<sup>3</sup>

These ideas that underplay the role of the masses would be discerned in most writings of Max Weber in his analysis of a universal bureaucracy and those of various other earlier elitists like Mosca and Pareto and also contemporarily in many Western writings. Mosca and Pareto became apologists of the rising Fascist and counter-revolutionary movements in their country. In the final analysis the argument advanced by the political theorists, that certain amount of elbowroom must be given to the leaders to adjust and manipulate differences in order to maintain stability and that mass participation inhibits this adjustment is but an extension of the elitist theories. When 'masses' are being discussed, it is not to be viewed as an amorphous conglomeration or a heterogeneous multitude. Without a class definition of the 'masses' one would certainly be led to the conclusions drawn by the various critics of 'mass society.' A few examples are in order: J Ortega, Y Gasset<sup>4</sup> speak of mass predominance leading to

degeneration. They are hedonistic and work only when whipped. Le Bon<sup>5</sup> feels that crowds are powerful for destruction and not for creating a civilization. Shakespeare has also shown how Roman mobs behave after the speeches of Brutus as well as of Antony. Sometimes masses can be utilised by the ruling elites for totalitarian dictatorships or to establish 'garrison states' according to Laswell.<sup>6</sup> They are the fertile ground for breeding bureaucracy and over centralisation. The masses when viewed as consisting of classes by analysing the social distinctions between the classes and the reasons for these social distinctions, will be found to be not those amorphous groups of heterogeneous men who have no interest in any institution and are, therefore, available for any destructive act.

Perhaps, it is relevant here to recapitulate even by way of a parenthesis that the classical economists like Adam Smith and Ricardo held that the society is composed of classes and their income determined their classes. Only, they honestly felt that these social inequalities were necessary and legitimate.<sup>7</sup> The distinction between the social scientists of the classical type and those of the modern is that while the former had something to say, the latter have a lot to conceal.

There is a great deal of 'pluralist' writing, which while ostensibly criticising the elitist theory, puts forth the counter theory that there can be no concentration of power in any one homogeneous group but that it is shared by different groups and these groups representing different interests practise the arts of conciliation and coalition-formation and prevent any single unified group from even approaching a monopoly of political resources.<sup>8</sup> Kornhauser also makes a rather similar observation "Modern democracy diminishes the legitimacy of the elites, but it also encourages a multiplicity of competing elites."<sup>9</sup> It may well be so in terms of numbers who compete for leadership. It does not alter the qualitative class composition of the rulers. It matters little whether 'n' number of elites decide or 'x' number decide as long as they decide over the head of the 'masses' of the people. This dispersal is only confined to the 'neo-guardian' classes with the slight difference that Plato did not even theoretically permit of upward mobility among classes.

A deeper examination of this 'dispersal of power' theory would reveal that the different interest groups which come to the bargaining table and evolve a consensus are not mutually opposed groups with mutually exclusive interests but groups whose interests are mutually complementary. In many cases the same persons play 'multiple roles' championing different interests: the same caste groups with a slight 'make up' become the farmers' lobby, the trade unions' representatives, business interests and so on. Like a set of ventriloquists the same group speaks with different voices. There is a close linkage between the political elites, the bureaucratic elites, the rural gentry and the business communities which share the cake without conflict while the majority of the people just 'stand and star (v) e' not even conscious of how the whole process is

taking place once they perform the quinquennial ritual at the hustings. It is this pluralist model that is also being applied to Soviet society to examine how due to the operation of plural interests—the party interests, the state interests, the group interests, the technical interests, etc.,—the socialist state would gradually erode and resolve itself into a ‘good’ polyarchical state. This is one of the arguments in support of ‘congruence theory.’ In a class society it is quite natural that different groups will press their demands. But even there as long as the system’s equilibrium is maintained, these interests play the role to achieve maximum pay off for themselves. But this is different from the ideological unity of all groups in a socialist society where the interest of each group is not contradictory to the other but all are mutually complementary to each other in their aim of achieving the goal. This corresponds with the interests of the majority of the peoples, the working masses. In the bourgeois society these forces are always kept in the background or suppressed when they try to force themselves to the foreground. The mistake of these Western theorists, the genuine among them, lies in their assumptions that there is a homogeneity in the society’s social and economic life and these are perfectly integrated societies.

Should the study of political science concern itself on how various leaders come to power, how they manipulate power, how they build up their following, how they fight their rights and in short who gets what, when and how, or should it be more meaningful in terms of the progress of the people towards achieving a life that is happier than the existing one, removing exploitation of any kind, removing hunger, privation and misery, making every individual human really equal so that democracy can be meaningful and real. This alternative is dismissed by most western political scientists as being old-fashioned and classical since nowhere can there be a democracy in the real sense of the term. After all, democracy like French spelling has many silent letters. This is especially so in the modern days when governmental functions have become too complex to permit of constant popular intervention.

Therefore, every political system has a big stratum of apoliticals who for various reasons do not display interest in political affairs. Like an ice-berg only a small section of the people appear on the political arena and therefore it is implicitly assumed that these are the people that matter. Since only few political activists matter, it is enough to study how these men get ‘recruited’ to politics—what their psychological motivations or personality factors are.<sup>10</sup> Thus has come about a veritable array of psycho-political literature that tries to explain political processes. Cultural and social setting form a part of the social integument since they ignore the whole kernel inside, namely, the movement of the masses. It is only the political activist stratum on the top, according to these studies, that dramatise social changes while the whole masses are mere passive elements. However, one of the main planks on which democracy is said

to stand is freedom to participate in the decision-making of the state or in the control of those who make decisions. This does not mean, however, that politics should be concerned only with those who make the decisions or how and who make the decisions come to occupy and perpetuate themselves in those positions. Such a view point could only lead to the defeat of the most important component of democracy namely, participation. Here it is that the behavioural persuasion created a seemingly iconoclastic image of the new generation of political scientists following the trail of Laswell. In a bid to find out the views, opinions and the 'miranda' of the people so as to advise the policy-makers as to what the people would stand up for and what they would not, they devised the new methodology that has now come into vogue—that makes elaborate use of statistical tests in very many cases for their own sake rather than to throw new light on dark spots. This is a sort of pragmatism that can be traced back to the so-called realistic philosophers of the Aristotelean vintage—just to find a correlation between what one finds superficially and one's own declarations. This view would only result in 'coping up with' day to day problems in an incremental manner. Though the behavioralists could protest that they are not political realists in this sense but believe in applying models and constructing theory yet in reality what has happened is only an accumulation and replication of mindless data. Like the almanac the researches are full of 'facts' and no ideas—and as in the almanac many are useless and irrelevant facts. They are not even truths. For all the galaxy of political scientists who espoused this new 'revolution,' in a matter of couple of decades the balloon was pricked and the sophistry is shown for what it is in the very country of its origin.<sup>11</sup> The only favourable features about this 'revolution' is that it seeks to demolish the artificial boundaries in the disciplines of social sciences.

The question that David Easton asks about the work of political scientists in U S is also relevant, though his answer is inadequate. He asks, How can we account for the neglect of the way in which the distribution of power within the system prevents measures from being taken in sufficient degree and time to escape the resort to violence in the expression of demands, a condition that threatens to bring about deepest crisis of political authority that the United States has ever suffered?<sup>12</sup>

Shed off the American political science jargon, like 'system' and 'demands' what seems to bother any academic political scientist more than the explosion of violence in the contemporary period and the sufferings of the people as a result, is the threat to the (established) political authority. In fact, the threats to (established) political authority today, whether in India or United States or France is not the existence of pluralist forces at the super-structural level but a more profound contradiction at the sub-stratum. This cannot be resolved by a few corrections here and a few corrections there but calls for fundamental changes in the produc-

tion relations and till these are brought about, involvement of the masses in political struggles sometimes characterised by violence, cannot be avoided. Violence erupts not necessarily because of the masses seeking to 'express their demands' but because the political 'powers that be' feel their position threatened and do their best to suppress the masses by coercion. Since within the existing system it is impossible for the fundamental changes to be brought about, the threat to the system will always persist and mass actions will always erupt. It is no use resorting to psychopathological analyses of certain individuals to explain political upheavals, as Harold Laswell does, as at best, they would give only the reasons why certain individuals join certain movements and not why a qualitatively different thing called a 'movement' takes place.

A look at the tremendous crisis that is taking place in the country would demonstrate that the 'system' cannot function if it is to produce the 'outputs' that it is at present doing. Apart from corruption and inefficiency, there is an entrenchment of vested interests at every level debilitating the routine functioning of law and order. There is politically no alternative that would canalise the popular discontent into channels of revolutionary activity—not parliamentary game. Even if there were to be a two-party system with more or less the same class composition, it would not prevent mass agitation with the opposition party trying to 'exploit the situation.' This challenge by the masses cannot be merely explained away by empirical data which is not informed by a proper theory.

Since 'too much of participation' is a dangerous thing for the functioning of 'democracy', and the political elites by themselves cannot ascertain what the preference of the people are, they should be given the knowledge about the peoples' preferences obtained in a 'scientific' manner. This empiricism considers that any adventure into ideas is mere speculation and that ideology has become unnecessary since what is necessary has already been achieved. There is an end of ideology accordingly when, as a matter of fact, the war is yet to begin and the swords have to be unsheathed. As the poet J R Lowell wrote :

It's war we are on, not politics

It's systems that are wrangling now not parties.

If politics is just a sort of a chess game as it is pictorially represented on the jackets of many political books, let the players play them but the chessmen in the real society are not lifeless wooden things, but men and women with flesh and blood. With the new technological and scientific revolution and the exploitation that takes place under cover of religion, rule of law, parliamentary democracy and legal equality and such other older and newer varieties of opiates, these pseudo-theories cannot pass muster for long. Much of the mumbo-jumbo might have had its relevance but as time wears out the bluff is called. One does not want to sound romantic by saying this but only wishes to demonstrate that

the existentialist and solipsist descriptions cannot satisfy any more. "Many philosophers", said Marx, "have interpreted the world, but the point is to change it." There is nothing rhetorical about this. Sometimes one wonders whether the bourgeois scientists evade the broad generalisations and seek refuge under empiricism to highlight insignificant facts.<sup>13</sup>

A good deal of empirical work has been done on political parties and their role in mobilising the people and making them participate in the process of decision-making. But these do not explain a patent fact as to how in the U S A there is so much of fanfare to make a mere choice between Tweedledom and Tweedledee and in election after election the system spews out a Kennedy or a Johnson or a Nixon, the only difference between each of these being the name while they behave almost in the same diabolical fashion towards countries like Cuba, or Vietnam or Chile which exhibit the 'temerity' to question the unwanted interference of U S in their internal affairs. How to explain the fact of the Congress Party in India whose unpopularity is patent to any casual observer of the Indian scene and is a byword for dishonesty and inefficiency among the Indian people, winning election after election with a thumping majority. In the face of these facts one has to be wary about the findings and interpretations such as the ones being ventured now and then by our tribe calling itself 'political scientists' instead of being more candid and calling itself political quacks lifting chapter and verse from whatever some foreigner says, since such banalities become sacred gospels once someone else from the West says it. The fact that the ideology of any given time is the ideology of the ruling class, therefore the various theorists that have come up with contemporary, 'theories' on politics like those of 'political development'<sup>14</sup> 'systems theory' are the apologists of the *status quo* trying their best to 'maintain the equilibrium' and 'manage tensions.' It serves as a good defence of the dominant classes who shape the cultural values. It is said that differentiated structures have to be created to tackle the diverse functions that have to be performed by 'political systems' in a more developed society and to maintain the system and adapt itself. So what? What is so novel about such a simple thing that is found so well exemplified in natural science itself? The giraffe develops a neck, the elephant its proboscis and the chameleon its colour pattern. The main quest has become, to the brand of comparative political scientists the identification of the structures that have to perform these diverse functions and see their interrelationship. Now, the point is not whether all this analysis is static or dynamic and if it is the former how to make it the latter. The point is more fundamental: Where it is static or dynamic it is certainly dangerous if one concedes that the 'system' such as the one that is being endured today has to be destroyed. If this state apparatus, which has been devised as an organ for maintaining exploitative social relation and for crushing any attempts at changing it by the use of an iron heel either its own or borrowed (as happened in Chile with the killing of

president Salvadore Allende) is accepted as a 'given' then one can go on into endless debates about the relative efficacies of one political 'approach' over the other. But while professors of political science keep dealing with these intricacies, crises are not warded off, masses will not wait. There seems to be a divine right theory of elites operating by which sons and daughters and even widows of elites in their turn wear the mantle of power, thus maintaining a continuous thread of succession. Theorising on those deals and calling it political science is elevating chicanery to a holy pedestal. Together with the mass media and the press which is in the pay of these groups, the intellectuals also join in the chorus of singing the praise of democracy! Whom does this consensus-building benefit? How are people, who are not going to be the beneficiaries of this consensus which helps build up political development, be interested in the whole process of bargaining among the leaders of the different interests? The system theorists have laid great emphasis upon the achievement of 'goals' by adapting the resources' and establishing 'harmony' by inducing the individuals to 'conform' to the 'value system'. All this is possible only if the structures are maintained and for the maintenance of the structures participation by the people should not go beyond a given adherence to the prescribed ritual either qualitatively or quantitatively, for that would destroy the 'harmony'. The structures like the electrical regulators which perform the function of maintaining a particular amount of voltage to keep the gadget in working condition, have also to see that a particular quantum of participation is maintained and it does not exceed this.

The quantitatively impressive literature on political development which emphasises the need for participation does assume by participation a system-supporting type of participation. Maintaining these structures, it is impossible to see how any change could ever be brought about whatever means might be adopted, for changing the socio-economic conditions of the society. By the inexorability of this structural functioning, the poor would remain poor if not become poorer while the rich would grow richer. This is what happened with foreign aid whose ostensible purpose at least was to mitigate the evils of poverty in the nations of the third world. In a way this is what happened even in Panchayati Raj in India. While the Panchayati Raj was instituted for the purpose of creating more self-reliance among the masses of the poor people and affording conditions for leadership to be generated from among them, in actual fact the very opposite happened. The same old traditional classes again grabbed these 'democratic' institutions and turned them for their own benefit. Thus, for all the exhortations from the national leaders, the common people had no interest in the Panchayati Raj institutions. Without grappling with this problem any analysis of the existential situation leading to a conclusion that people are generally apathetic and later on trying to rationalise the situation would be not merely superficial but pernicious. The institutions of democratic decentralization thus have served to reactivate the traditional

elites. Since the whole view is existentialist, the theorists are busy characterising different forms of power distribution and the mechanics used for it by different labels.

Going into an interminable discussion as to whether a particular state is monarchy or polyarchy or any other satisfies only the 'academic' thirst for descriptions, classification, explanation and evaluation. Even here, to start with, description is never complete and like the six blind men of Hindoostan each person's description depends upon his own choice and point of view. Therefore, there is nothing like an objectivity independent of one's commitment. It is not 'objectivity' that characterises the modern social science theories but 'objectivism' which is ostensibly disinterested, but in fact, conceals the interests of the ruling classes in a confusing pseudo-scientific language and meaningless and irrelevant concepts. The facts one chooses are dependent upon the conceptual frame one has constructed and the description, in turn, depends upon the so selected facts and finally the evaluation is dependent on the description and the norms one sets to measure the object by. (Even the objectivity of the physical sciences is measured by the standards and tools which are the creation of human agency and hence subjective to that extent). Hence when approaches to the understanding of politics claim to be scientifically neutral, since the behavioral revolution has ushered in positive empiricism by introducing measurement, it is difficult to take it at its face value. None of the political scientists could predict the different military coups nor explain why Vietnam could defy USA's military might. They do not even take in their calculations the working of the CIA and the various underhand dealings that affect 'political development.'

Political Science as viewed in the narrow sense is only a procedural science and not a substantive science. It does not deal with how to alter the socio-economic life of the society, how to expel exploitation of any kind but it indulges in the sterile mechanics of leadership-building, bargaining, pressurising. The following words from one of the more candid theorists would be revealing.

The fact remains that some form of functionalism is the only current alternative to Marxism as the basis of some kind of general theory in political science.<sup>15</sup>

Expressions like, 'some form of functionalism' and 'some kind of general theory' are significant and indicate an air of desperation, something to cling to in order to save one's self from the 'spectre that is haunting' over the world! Why cling to this as though it were the last straw? Instead of facing the real issue squarely why should pseudo-theories and academic subterfuges be offered to the nations of the third world?

While Fascism and Communism were dubbed together, as 'enemies of open society,' how is it that while fascism is now dead as a dodo, communism in spite of the great schism still holds such a threat as to strain social scientists to offer some alternative or the other—only to be rejected

by their own contradictions. This is because Marx and Engels constructed their theory on the basis of the inherent strength of the masses to change history. They do not regard the superstructures as being more important than they are unlike the western theorists who wish to preserve the system from mass onslaught.

"To preach to the workers that they should in all circumstances abstain from politics" said Engels, "is to drive them into the arms of the priests or the bourgeois republicans."<sup>16</sup> This is precisely what the anti-participationist theorists seem to be doing in highly sophisticated writings about the 'apathy' among a great majority of the people with supporting empirical evidence from election studies. In fact, there is again nothing new that has been discovered by these empirical scientists. Hegel had long ago argued that all citizens cannot participate in the affairs of the state because for most of them the affairs of the state are too alien to be at home in it.<sup>17</sup> The state as a march of God on earth has to serve its true purpose and not pander to the beast! Jaspers dwells again on the same theme. State in its glory vindicates its mission—infralapsarianism of a secular variety!

Among other things, it is this elitist view that Marx had trenchantly opposed. Participation to Marx was always class-based mass participation and not elitist.

It is an essential process by which the worker is educated to bring about the revolution and to take hold of state power. Since the working class is the majority, raising them to the level of the ruling class is to win the battle of democracy. This is the first step in the revolution.<sup>18</sup>

There can be no harmony of interests as contemplated by the Western theorists. There is a divergency of interests between different groups and society as Marxist sociologists are arguing.<sup>19</sup>

Times have changed since Marx had postulated mass participation, and Lenin's early experiments with Soviets. Things have become much more complicated and between the basic local decision-making tier to the national decision-making tier there are any number of complicated and highly technicalised intermediary steps that receive information, screen it and feed it. This has to be more pronounced in countries where the process of industrialisation and modernisation has to be hastened without being unduly delayed by the cumbersome procedures as required by classical democratic functioning. Again it is in such societies that the superstructure of political ideas have to play an important role in the great transformation from feudal and semi-feudal conditions to Socialism. Political battle is the most important one to bring about this change. This cannot be done without mass mobilisation and participation, without imbuing the people with the spirit of change in outlook and in their old-fashioned thinking. To mobilise the energy of the people towards the great leap forward, towards increasing the peasants and workers' political

consciousness in order to span the gulf between the different stages in development—is a step towards the liquidation of the disparities. Apathy and indifference are incompatible with this great challenge. How far China's experience is successful or otherwise is beyond our pale here, but, what is relevant is that greater and greater participation of the people in the programmes of national development are not incompatible with the complicated and highly technical nature of the present day administration, because in the final analysis it is the participating masses that have to change the society and not the administration. Involvement of the masses in development work does not mean the type of mass action visualized by the various theorists on mass societies mentioned earlier. It is a dynamic relationship between the leaders who are ready to educate the masses and in turn get their education from the masses regarding their aspirations and capacities. The elite alone cannot achieve much without the active involvement of the masses at every level. This line adopted successfully during the anti-Japanese war period has been the main line of Mao Tse-Tung and the process of mutual interaction between the leaders and the masses has always been stressed by the Chinese Communist Party in its bid to rid the party of individualist bureaucrats, subjectivists and elites and how successful it was in advancing the Chinese society is a matter of acknowledged fact. The question, "But at what expense?", can also be easily answered if the balance of material advantages that the Chinese people gained and the intangible factors that they are said to have lost, is struck. At what cost did the Western 'democracies' become the so-called 'welfare states' of today and at what length of time? While judging the progress made by communist-dominated countries development is juxtaposed to sacrifice since in a short time span the 'sacrifice' made by a few leisurely classes appears very intense. But the sacrifice and silent suffering of the working classes and peasantry who form the majority, starting from the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, the crises and strikes and wars till the present day of affluence does not figure at all on the debit side of the Western progress. This question has been bandied about so often that we need not labour it further.

The point is, whether any developing society can afford the easy optimism, of course reinforced with such sample surveys as are made in affluent Western societies, of leaving the complicated matters of state to be decided by the elite—not even the elected representatives? A society where exploitation reduced the mass of people to degradation, poverty and disease can ill afford the luxury of allowing a few of its 'intelligent' elite to decide their destiny. The developmental theorists while professing to eliminate the grinding poverty of these nations of the third world want greater participation of the people, particularly the developmentalists in political theory keeping the Anglo-saxon model as the standard of democratic polity judge the other countries as being less participant.<sup>40</sup> Apart from other fundamental criticism of this presumption, how can one

accept a theory that assumes a basic identity of interests among the rich and the poor people while in truth they are mutually opposed as is evidenced by large accumulation of wealth on the one hand and marginalisation on the other? As Mao Tse-Tung says, "The truth of any knowledge and theory is determined not by subjective feelings, but by the objective results in social practice."<sup>21</sup> Social practice points undoubtedly in the direction of the widening of the gulf between 'the rich and poor.'

The experiences of Telangana revolt during 1946 to 1948 are germane here. Instead of quoting what some people said about the French Revolution or the American War of Independence or the Russian Revolution or the movement in Yen-an (on which Mao Tse-Tung has written) which are temporally as well as spatially so far away, I would like to recapitulate the experiences in Telangana during the liberation struggle there. Killing of some of the local deshmukhs and jagirdars, after they were tried by the 'peoples' courts was considered an atrocity by the 'enlightened' press and public while the majority of the villagers in those areas felt that the punishments were very just and had been long overdue. Rarely did punishment exceed the crime nor did any criminal tyrant escape the punishment by virtue of the multifarious technical loopholes cleverly seeded in the bourgeois law for protecting the richer criminals. Here, what is important is that the most non-participant, most timid peasantry and labouring classes accustomed to centuries of inhuman exploitation and slavery, began to participate, because participation here was a class participation which was meant to safeguard their interests. The Congress government after the 'police action' once again 'restored' the land to the 'rightful owners' after Vinobha Bhave 'demonstrated' how revolutions should be peaceful and started the Bhoodan movement in Telangana. It is difficult to say whether Mao was wrong when he said that a revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay or painting a picture or doing embroidery and that it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. One fact again emerged after this 'gentle revolutionary' Vinobha Bhave started the movement. There was greater participation of the rehabilitated feudal elements, the police, All India Radio and a team of gramdan workers and a team of publicity-makers but none from among the peasantry. From then onwards, slowly but gradually, the participation of the peasants, workers and the rural poor tapered off.

During the first general election the Communist leader, Ravi Narayan Reddy polled more than even Pandit Nehru and set up a record.<sup>22</sup> As election after election proved to be of no consequence to the people at large, the poll turn-over also grew thin, until finally today the district panchayat leadership has also passed into the hands of the very kulaks whom a couple of decades ago the masses tried to eliminate from the levers of power, with a great deal of sacrifice. Apart from the split in the peasant movement led by the Communists, the general apathy caused by

the feeling of unconcern with what the ruling party is trying to do is also responsible for this relapse into inaction.

Therefore, mere marginal change will not bring about a social transformation. It does not presuppose that the old traditional classes would automatically get eroded and the people will be ready for the new roles that are expected of them. With all the special protections provided in the constitution or in the Panchayati Raj legislations, the backward and weaker sections of the community have not been able to make adequate use of them, much less, capture positions of leadership. Local communities cannot develop merely on their own strength without forming part of the overall system. The leadership at the higher levels forge their connections with the entrenched traditional leadership at the local levels thus rendering it impossible to bring about anything more than mere incremental changes in the socio-economic sphere. Since traditional leadership is more deeply entrenched in the rural areas, it is not enough creating a few structures for people's participation without giving it adequate support from above. The programme that the Government of India has launched like the Small Farmer's Development Agencies or the Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers' Development agencies or the Crash Employment Programmes etc. have been conceived of outside the structures existing in the rural areas and they are, therefore, proving to be non-starters. With only an administrative set-up and without proper mobilization of the people at large, these are again bound to founder even as the community development blocks did. Programmes cannot be implemented without the proper mobilisation of the masses and generation of genuine leadership from among them. In Panchayat Raj, the leadership that has sprung up is a spurious one and hence it cannot mobilise people; where the social structure is feudal or semi-feudal such schemes which promote small-scale developments instead of breaking the feudal ties would strengthen and concentrate wealth and decision-making power in the same old rich classes. Mere exhortations for participating in the 'greatest adventure' of building a new India would mean nothing but what it is—an exhortation. The Five Year Plan documents detail at length the need for popular participation for making the plan successful. Participation is an opportunity given to the people to operate the levers of power, to control and share the production and management of resources. The point is to make the poorer sections of people the subjects of their development rather than the objects. Participation is not a gift from the government but a support to the government which intends earnestly to bring about changes and not to a government that declares platitudes from platforms and sets the legal machinery in motion the moment people begin to translate promises into performance.

Mobilisation of the people for implementing programmes if taken up seriously, would certainly bring about a good deal of conflict. The conflicts would be caused by those who oppose the pressures from the

people for a legitimate share in the resources. The difficulties encountered in the implementation of agrarian reform are a case in point. Apart from the use of pressure and violence clever circumventions of law are resorted to with total impunity. In such a situation consensus-building is a bogus slogan because a conflict has to be solved and development has to take place. Conflict need not necessarily be accompanied by violence. But if violence erupts, those who are responsible for it—those who are opposed to the transformation of the social structure—must be punished. It is in such moments that the vested interests can whip up mass hysteria and create violent actions which will look like mass actions—these are equated by the theorists of mass politics with political movements involving the masses for a radical transformation of the traditional structures. These are pseudo-mass movements which are generated by a clever arousal of the baser instincts in man, reinforced by financial assistance given to agent provocateurs and rowdies. These have no programme of action except destruction and terrorism. The communal rioting, and most of the agitations for the linguistic and regional identification belong to this variety of 'mass' action. All mass actions for regional development are not necessarily so much for drawing the attention of the government to injustices as for inconveniencing the government in order to accommodate certain sections of the elite in the corridors of power. The agitation for a separate Andhrā in 1972 or a separate Telangana prior to this in 1969 are engineered agitations which had nothing in common with what happened in Telangana in 1946 to 1948 or in Kerala when peasantry revolted in Vayalar, Ambalapuzha and Punnappra during the 1940's or in Bengal during the Tebhaga movement in 1946, or earlier when Gandhiji led the 1921, 1930 and 1942 movements. The Champaran, the Bardolai and other 'satyagrahas', the strikes in support of Royal Indian Navy ratings, mutiny in 1946<sup>23</sup> are mass movements not in the sense in which William Kornhauser, Erik Allardt and Stern Rokkan following the earlier writers have analysed with such repugnance and awe.

It is not as if every day on every occasion the masses will be mobilised by elites and there exists no intermediary structures between the elites and the masses. This fear is unwarranted and is intended to clothe the fear of breakdown of established structures in a clever language that would conjure up a picture of socialism looking like a twin brother of fascism, and the apathy of the people appearing like virtuous democracy. It is argued that such a situation in fact is the *sine qua non* of democracy. In any society, during certain periods of imminent radical change, the intermediary structures between the elites and the masses will apparently disappear since there will be a greater convergence of interests of different groups than during ordinary days. This should not drive any one to think that a dangerous development has taken place leading to a mass society—in the pejorative sense. Is not a hegemony which does not permit of any participation at all, more dangerous than even a mass society in the above sense?

The involvement of masses creates a tremendous reaction among the bourgeois social scientists of the West than the rise of a series of hegemonic, dictatorial military regimes in the third world countries. In fact, 'scholarly' works are written about the progress made by these dictatorial regimes and the 'modernisation' ushered in by the military: When a mass leader like a Fidel Castro, or an Aidit or an Allende appears on the scene attempting to mobilise the masses for action, the international subversion gets busy unleashing terrorism in different forms to destroy them and install its own trusted puppets who turn into tyrants. Whether these subversions succeed as in the case of assassination of the Indonesian Communist leader, Aidit along with whom at least a million people were killed in 1965<sup>24</sup> and in the case of Allende in Chile in 1973, or miserably fail as in the case of the invasion of Bay of Pigs to wipe out Castro's regime under the blessings of a 'great' president, the fact remains that whenever a country of the third world exhibits mass mobilisation, conscious attempts are made to scotch it. In the alternative what is recommended is participatory, peaceful and 'constructive' activities like community development, cooperatives, elections, which without disturbing the *status quo* give the illusion of participation to the people—as if politics were a humanitarian activity. Religion is not the only opium of the people! These are styled as the 'Nation-building' activities. This concept has caught the imagination of the imitators of the West who prescribe many ways of achieving this goal by declaring how the caste system has got politicised, how bargains take place in the 'political system' to establish 'consensus' how problems facing the people starving for food, and the crisis of unemployment could be solved by marginal adjustments in the economy, redoing the organisation of states and toning up the administration, whatever that might mean. As argued earlier if all the structures that were created for the economic development of the people are only serving the richer and more privileged people to perpetuate themselves, the whole system is like the rocking horse that gives all the jolts and shocks to the rider without taking him anywhere.

The other extreme is the false definition and the resultant assumption of the concept of participation by some of the Marxists of Latin America and the splintered groups of Marxist-Leninists in India. Without really involving the masses in the process of participation, short cuts are invented by which revolution can be brought about. Che Guevara's *focus* or the *dalams* of extremists in Srikakulam for all their individual acts of heroism were only indulging in self-destructive acts. Instead of mobilising the people for democratic action, their struggles only resulted in creating panic among the people. If historical parallels can be cited, the criticism of Engels of the Blanquists is relevant.<sup>25</sup> Like the Blanquists, these people believe that if a small group attempts at a revolutionary uprising it may carry the mass of the people and accomplish a victorious revolution. With the new revival given to Trotskyite ideas of pseudo

revolution these groups have grown in various countries. Instead of preparing the exploited masses for participation in the broad democratic struggle and sharpening them for a final revolution to abolish exploitation and diversities, they rely on a small band of young intellectuals, desperate and adventurous characters to deliver the world in a straight fight from the grip of imperialism. In the final analysis these desperate actions result in the further splintering of the working class movement, further intensification of fratricidal war among revolutionaries to the immense satisfaction of the exploiting classes, leading in the end to effacement. Examples of such distorted actions which do not prepare the masses are not far to seek both abroad and in India. The disastrous results are also not difficult to perceive. Though these groups do not openly avow their dislike of mass participation as the Western political scientists mentioned earlier, in effect, what they say is the other side of the same coin. While the bourgeois social scientists propound the theory of elites who decide and bargain among themselves as to what reforms should be brought in for the whole mass of people who are apathetic anyway, these revolutionaries also feel that these militant elites should decide what is good for the masses. We have one type of elites replaced by another type.

Coming back to the bourgeois concept of participation, the Indian planning exercise is a typical example of this mock exercise in popular mobilisation. One has only to read the innumerable speeches of Pandit Nehru and various others who were working with him both in the ministry as well as in the administration—men like S K Dey, V T Krishnamachari, Tarlok Singh and others—to be convinced of the stress that was laid on popular participation for the success of the plan. It is superfluous to add that these sentiments are enshrined in the plan documents not only of India but other countries as well.

In Britain too the Skeffington Committee strikes a similar note when it says,

There is a growing demand by many groups for more opportunity to contribute and for more say in the working out of policies which affect people not merely at election time, but continuously as proposals are being hammered out and, certainly, as they are being implemented.<sup>26</sup>

For all the declarations about peoples' participation the Indian planners never took this aspect seriously since it is the belief of the policy-makers that the intricacies of policies are too technical for the comprehension of the masses of the people. This belief is generally shared by most of the modern western political theorists. This is the logical corollary of both the elitist models or the bargaining process in political decisions in a polyarchy model. In the latter, inspite of the existence of participation and public contest when it came to a question of classes as in ancient Athens, or races, as in contemporary United States, there arose a dual system of violence and quasi-pluralistic social order as Dahl has amply

demonstrated.<sup>27</sup> The inequality, either ethnic or class or both, does therefore stand as an incubus against the real functioning of participation which in the first analysis sustains a democracy. Hence to think that certain matters of public policy are too complicated and technical for the common masses to understand and react intelligently is only an expression of the innate desire to perpetuate the class distinctions. To solicit the participation of the people, the "amorphous people" in planning is merely seeking their approval for the support of the system which may not be favourable for the majority of them. The right to protest and agitate against such measures which they feel are not in their interest will be with them notwithstanding the pious declarations by the leadership that everything is being done in the interests of the people.

The agitation that rocked Gujarat and brought down the ministry of Chiman Bhai Patel in the early part of 1974 is the type of mass participation that would characterise all such failures of taking the masses of the people into confidence, so to say, and being unresponsive to the legitimate grievances of the majority of the people. One would be entitled to ask—what has political stability, for which the 'political scientists' propound theories, to offer to the suffering majority of the people? Instead of taking punitive actions against the elements that are responsible for the misery caused to the masses and mounting a series of pre-emptive strikes against potential enemies of the people, an indulgence in 'democratic platitudes' is to out-Nero Nero in callous fiddling. Such mass actions are the result of a callous government which indulges only in garrulousness and employs a band of trigger-happy police men and a wooden bureaucracy to suppress the agitation. To blame mass action is to blame the thermometer for showing a high temperature. One cannot ignore these factors that cause such mass actions and at the same time ask the people to 'participate' in the planning and maintain stability in which people have no stake. The happenings in Gujarat, whatever might have been the various forces involved in it, as in the happenings earlier in Andhra Pradesh, are a portent of the terrible instability that is gripping the country.

In a society where yawning disparities divide the different classes, the villages and urban areas, the masses and the elites, to expect people to participate peacefully in the 'nation-building' activities which to the masses of the people may mean at best some incrementalism, is to be either honestly misguided or to dishonestly design to misguide the people. There is tremendous mass activity necessitated by the ugly and stark realities of the fast deteriorating socio-economic conditions. Among others the chief symptoms of 'every real revolution is the usually rapid, sudden and abrupt increase in the number of ordinary citizens who begin to participate actively, independently and effectively in political life and in the organisation of the state'.<sup>28</sup> This is only one part of the revolution. This participation has to be properly led and the unleashed energy channelled in the direction of destroying the disparities.

There has never been a greater fragmentation among political parties than at the present juncture. Even the smallest regional parties have split and go about begging for votes, getting into the most brazen-faced opportunistic alliances not for properly using power but for abusing it. The result is sporadic actions here and there, aided and abetted by the disgruntled elements among those who were outwitted in the game of power politics. This changes the complexion of a movement and causes confusion, as to who is using whom and for what end. The major party in the country, the Congress Party, itself being a medley of various interests cannot by its very nature take any decisive step nor can it mobilise the masses for any action except during the elections by resorting to questionable practices and supporting the dominant caste group in each area. It has become a good machine for election manouvre. It indulged in organising 'mass agitation' in support of vested interests when it found that a state government tried to seriously implement its programme, as happened in Kerala in 1959. When the Namboodiripad ministry tried to implement the pledges it made to the people under the blessings of the then Prime Minister, the present Prime Minister organised a 'liberation struggle'. The so-called 'liberation struggle' in Kerala in 1959 in spite of all support it received from the Central Government and the involvement of the lumpen elements, did not assume the dangerous dimensions of the separatist Telangana agitation in 1969, demanding the resignation of Brahmananda Reddy ministry. There were also various other agitations that shook the ministries in various states to the roots. But yet nothing was done with such expedition to remove these ministries as was done in the case of the first Namboodiripad ministry.

If the ruling party at the time was not in full sympathy with the programme of implementation of land reforms, at least after the mid-term election of 1971 the party under the leadership of Indira Gandhi apparently evinced a more earnest interest in agrarian reform. But the declaration remained a mere pious one and owing to lack of political will, which in turn can be strengthened by the capacity to mobilise the masses for both pre-emptive and punitive action against vested landed interests in the rural areas, the intended reform remained a non-starter. The ministries set up for the purpose of implementing such of the marginal land reforms as were promised by Mrs Gandhi could not even remain in their saddles. Each one of them fell like ninepins against the terrific onslaught of rural reaction. When possible, agitations were whipped up on certain emotive slogans, to remove the ministries. But one thing that mass agitations of these types indicate is that not all of them are for a progressive cause and not all mass actions are untainted by the active involvement of the vested interests who try to divert the tremendous energy unleashed during these movements into directions which in the long run are antithetic to the interests of the very classes of people who sacrifice most. History is replete with examples of such betrayals. The withdrawal by Mahatma

Gandhi of the 'Satyagraha' movement of 1921 was such an act of grand betrayal, though the Mahatma called the launching of the movement a 'Himalayan blunder.' The danger that a mass movement may take a most reactionary line or turn to fascism as Germany and Italy witnessed should not blind one to the necessity of mobilising the masses to action for changing the exploitative nature of society.

No revolution ever takes a straight and easy path; if it were so, any one could lead a revolution. In a country of India's size and complexity and the indifferent development of its various regions, any easy formula to bring about change cannot be evolved. This is not to suggest that people should not use the available limited avenues to better their lot and try to bring about certain structural changes that would eliminate poverty. The political and economic power structure in the country is not designed for the elimination of poverty. The power of the government is derived from the feudal landlords and industrial tycoons who perennially finance the political leadership and the administration. As Dandekar points out, "If the interests of the poor masses are to be attended to, the power base of the government must change. The power must flow from the masses. The rich will have to be squeezed, not for election purposes but for the economic development of the masses, to give them assured employment and a minimum income."<sup>9</sup>

But this is arguing in circles. Unless the masses get power they cannot 'squeeze' the rich. The rich are not there to permit themselves to be voluntarily squeezed and unless they are squeezed, the situation of the masses is not going to improve. This is where political process assumes precedence over the economic. This is not an expression of the petty patriotism for one's discipline. As Lenin pointed out, "The most essential, the decisive interests of classes can be satisfied only by radical political changes in general".<sup>30</sup> The highest form of economic struggle is the political struggle without waging which in the most dogged fashion no economic changes can be brought about.

The fact that such a simple measure like land reform has not been implemented shows the entrenchment of the feudal elements in the power structure and the happy co-existence of these classes with the economically powerful capitalist class without ever working at cross purposes. The large industrial houses have been growing in spite of the government holding the 'commanding heights' of the economy.<sup>31</sup> The table on the following page shows the rise of a few as an illustration. It is not an exhaustive list.

In the agricultural sector even according to the false accounting of the governmental revenue records only five million hectares out of a total of 150 million hectares under cultivation have been redistributed. As regards surplus land and waste land distributed, the picture is no better. The capacity of the land owning gentry to hoard foodgrains in spite of good harvests and to thwart the government's half-hearted attempts at

GROWTH OF INDUSTRIAL HOUSES (in crores of Rupees)			
	1958	1967-68	percentage increase
Tata	223.41	584.63	161.5
Birla	112.87	579.63	413.5
Martin Burn	72.94	174.29	138.9
Sahu Jain	55.11	79.68	44.58
Thapar	19.60	103.30	427.00
Sri Ram	19.82	107.41	441.9

procurement have also clearly indicated that playing the game of politics according to the 'rules of the game' by the masses may not be conducive to their bare existence, not to speak of rising above the very conservative poverty line drawn by the economists. While at the overall national level the small but powerful capitalist groups control the situation without jeopardising the 'commanding heights' position assumed by the public sector, at the lower level the feudal landlords manipulate the elections and keep or remove men from offices according to the exigencies of the situation.

The peculiarity of the Indian economic development is the preservation and maintenance of feudal ties at the rural level along with industrialisation and development of capitalism. It should be urged that a total destruction of feudal production relations do not take place in any 'bourgeois democratic' revolution. There are always a few adjustments and alignments in every epoch; these will be more so in a country of India's size and diversity. But, by and large, in the industrialised societies of the West the dominant social relations are no more feudal and there is no co-existence of feudal relations with capitalist production relations as is the situation in India. This is also responsible for the conflicting interests represented in many political parties in India. But above all the ruling classes maintain a veneer of socialism. Thus, in all plan documents and resolutions broad and vague socialistic generalisations are indulged in, while at the operational levels no indications are given as to how the resources have to be mobilised and how the stranglehold of the rural rich and the monopoly houses is to be curbed. Therefore, the Panchayati Raj institutions or the co-operative institutions which according to the Planning Commission's reports, are the agencies to implement the programmes for the poorer sections and to mobilise the participation of the masses, instead of fulfilling these lofty functions remain *status quo*-maintaining institutions dominated by local tyrants and bosses.

The bureaucracy and the other components of the state apparatus are also geared to maintain this system and whenever a street riot or a violent but short-lived agitation takes place it is easily dealt with in an *ad hoc* manner. These 'anomic' outbursts are part of the system providing

a sort of negative feedback to the inputs of the system. In fact, many of these agitations are led by men who are interested in maintaining the system and want to gain a few positions denied to them in the regular legal process. Once they get what they want, they call off the agitations and conveniently forget the masses. The conduct of the Andhra separatists is a clear case.

Effective organisation of the masses of the people is essential for participation and not verbal platitudes and exhortations. Mass participation, therefore, cannot but be class-oriented and by the very nature cannot be secretive. Mass participation should free the common man from the tutelage of the elites and intellectuals and make him free to act with full sense of responsibility in his action. It is, therefore, at once an educative process and a process of self-assertion; France and even United States with all their affluence witnessed participatory action by students in decision-making, an experience that repudiates the theorists and apologists of apathy referred to earlier. Participation of the masses is necessary to reject the bureaucracy that has entrenched itself and stands as an incubus in the path of progress; to reject the political party which has built itself up as a single dominant party distributing patronage to the thin section of the people at the top and by virtue of such capacity able to keep divergent interests together; to break the ramshackle interlocking political institution that is incapable of moving forward and to democratically destroy the capitalist social system which with all its panoply of glib intellectual apologies, legal quibblings and clever alibis perpetuates and multiplies the evils of an unjust socio-economic dispensation manifesting itself in hoarding and black-marketing, adulteration and corruption, inflation and unemployment. It is a guarantee against anarchy and populism to which this system would otherwise ultimately lead, if mass actions are not organised to purge it of these elements.

<sup>1</sup> Walter Lippman, *The Public Philosophy*, Boston, Little Brown, and Co 1955, p39.

<sup>2</sup> Morris H Jones, 'In Defence of Apathy', *Political Studies* II, 1954, pp 25-37.

<sup>3</sup> Gareth Stedman Jones, 'History! The Poverty of Empiricism' in Robin Blackburn (ed) *Ideology in Social Science*, Basingstoke, Suffolk, Fontana, 1972, p 98.

<sup>4</sup> Jose Ortega, Y Gasset, *Revolt of the Masses*, WW Norton Co. Inc., 1957.

<sup>5</sup> Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, Ernest Benn, 1952.

<sup>6</sup> Harold D Laswell, 'The Garrison State', *The American Journal of Sociology*, XLVI, 1941, pp 455-468. Others are Walter Lippman, Hannah Arendt, and Eric Fromm, who also want the masses kept away from active involvement in politics. Karl Jaspers in 'Die geistige situation der Zeit' Leipzig, 1931, anticipates the most horrible working of mass mind in history and wants us to get back to religion. I do not pretend to know more than this about this book.

<sup>7</sup> Marx himself acknowledges this by saying "no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeois economists, economic anatomy of the classes". Marx to Weydemeyer. Letter written from London on March 5, 1852. *Selected Works*, Vol. I, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1969, p 528.

- <sup>8</sup> Robert A Dahl (citing Rajni Kothari,) *Polyarchy* New Haven, Yale University Press, 1971, pp 117-118.
- <sup>9</sup> William Kornhauser, *Politics of Mass Society*, New York, Free Press, 1959, p 238.
- <sup>10</sup> In fact, this approach is not entirely modern as some make it out to be by calling it a Behavioural Revolution. Aristotle and latterly Hobbes did go into human nature as determinants of political behaviour. Graham Wallas and Charles E Merriam are considered as having once again reawakened this spirit. Charles E Merriam gave such an importance to psychology that he rejected history as being irrelevant to political science. Then came various other psychological treatments of political personalities and analysis of certain psychological moments that determined political decisions. See Graham Wallas, *Human Nature in Politics*, and *Art of Thought*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1926; Charles E Merriam *New Aspects of Politics*, Chicago, 1925.
- <sup>11</sup> See for instance Christian Bay, "Politics and Pseudo-Politics: A Critical Evaluation of Some Behaviouralist Literature", *American Political Science Review* LIX, March 1965, 39-85; Charles McCoy and Joseph Playford (eds) *Apolitical Politics*, New York, Thomas Y Crowell Co., 1967.  
The much advertised David Easton's "New Revolution in Behavioural Science" *American Political Science Review*, Vol. LXIII, No. 4, December, 1969 should not however be mistaken to be in the category of challenges to Behaviouralism. It is an attempt to further strengthen it by using knowledge for reform.
- <sup>12</sup> David Easton, *op. cit.*
- <sup>13</sup> This is sought to be answered in David Easton's paper quoted earlier in which he says that post-behaviouralists join the venerable tradition of 'Greek classical philosophy', Karl Marx, John Dewey and modern existentialism. Strange bedfellows for Marx indeed!
- <sup>14</sup> Incidentally, the word "development" brought in liberal grants from such agencies like the Ford Foundation when research on the 'under developed' countries was launched.
- <sup>15</sup> WG Runciman, *Social Science and Political Theory*, Cambridge University Press, 1973, p 425.
- <sup>16</sup> Letter from F Engels to T Cuno, January 24, 1872, *Selected Works*, Vol 2, Moscow, 1973 p 425.
- <sup>17</sup> "Hegel's Philosophy of Right" (ed) R A Knox, Oxford University Press, 1940, p 201.
- <sup>18</sup> "Communist Manifesto", *Selected Works*, Vol, I p 216.
- <sup>19</sup> Stanislov Ossowski, *Class Structure in Social Consciousness*, London, 1963, criticises in general how Hegel's 'thoughtless inconsistency and managerial sense become really disgusting' p 125. Marx in a different context says, 'To be consciously an integral part of something is to participate consciously in it, to be consciously integral to it. Without this consciousness the member of the state would be an animal...Participation in political matters of general concern and participation in the State are, therefore, identical'. See Karl Marx, 'Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right' Cambridge University Press, 1970 pp 117-118.
- <sup>20</sup> G A Almond and S Verba, *Civic Culture*, Boston, Little Brown and Co, 1965 p 10.
- <sup>21</sup> Mao Tse-Tung, "On Practice, on the Relation between Knowledge and Practice, between Knowing and Doing" *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse-Tung* Peking 1971.
- <sup>22</sup> In the 1952 General Elections Ravi Narayan Reddy polled 3,09,162 votes while Pandit Nehru at the height of his popularity and power polled 2,33,581 votes with all the electoral machinery and money that were placed at his disposal. Compared to the Allahabad constituency of Nehru, the Nalgonda constituency is very backward with inadequate transport and intractable terrain.

- 23 This was compared to the mutiny on the Prince Potemkin in Czarist Russia in 1905. It was described by Lenin as the dress rehearsal of the October Revolution. India had only a dress rehearsal!
- 24 Donald Hindley, "Dilemmas of Consensus and Division: Indonesia's Search for a Political Format," *Government and Opposition* 4, Winter 1969, p 69.
- 25 Marx and Engels, "*Selected Works*" Vol 2, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1973, pp 380-382.
- 26 *People and Planning*, Report of the Committee on "Public Participation in Planning" London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, p 3, Reprinted 1972. The French Planning also solicits maximum participation of the various sections of the people but in fact it becomes an instrument in the hands of the industrialists and bureaucrats who have already prepared the plans and only seek a ratification from the broad sections of the people as a democratic ritual.
- 27 Robert A Dahl, *Polyarchy*, New Haven, Yale University Press 1971, pp 92-93.
- 28 VI Lenin, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in our Revolution—Draft of a Platform for the Proletariat Party", *Selected Works* Vol II, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1967 p 28
- 29 V M Dandekar, "Have We Turned the Corner?" *Illustrated Weekly of India*, October 2, 1973.
- 30 VI Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol 5 pp 390-391.
- 31 The expression 'commanding heights' was used in the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's resolution with reference to China's peaceful transformation into Socialism under the leadership of the People's Democratic Government.

M BASAVAPUNNIAH

*Revolutionary Techniques with Special  
Reference to Indian Conditions*

ONE of the greatest subjects of our times, is the subject of differences, disunity and split in the world communist movement, and the struggle in defence of Marxism-Leninism, the proletarian internationalism and the unity of the world socialist camp.

The Marxists-Leninists say that world capitalism has long ago entered into the stage of general crisis, and this general crisis, at the present, is in its third stage, the state of collapse of the capitalist system and final triumph of socialism on a world scale. This Marxist-Leninist truth is challenged by the bourgeois economists and their apologists, on the ground that there has been tremendous growth of capitalist production during the last quarter of a century and there has been a great technological revolution—a four-fold increase in the volume of industrial production during the last 25 years when compared to the entire growth of capitalist productive forces during the last two centuries or so. They also say that the present day capitalism is a “planned capitalism” which does not face the problems of overproduction and under consumption, that new remedies are discovered to solve the old type periodical crises of capitalism, and that the entire theory of Marx on capitalist crisis is disproved etc.

These and similar other arguments in defence of the capitalist



has (d) different tactics and deviations and also, doubt to their different tactical tactics employed by the bourgeois imperialists in dealing with the working class movement and with the requirements of Socialism; (e) the method of using violence and the second method of giving space for concessions and reforms. In the second words of the zig-zagging of bourgeois tactics to tactics, aggravate the deviation in the labour movement have only to the right and left of opportunistic deviations, in fact, have a common source of bourgeois ideology and world outlook. These two are not antipodes, as they appear to be on the surface, but they are twins born out of the same class birth. It is a good idea to say that the great unevenness in the degree, extent and rate of socio-economic development of different socialist countries, and the trade, economic and cultural relations among them are also a source of difference, conflict and contradictions. A factor that was not present when there was only one socialist Soviet Union, and no other socialist country had yet come to exist.

Lastly, Maoists should not lose sight of the fact that the tactics of the ruling Communist parties in some vital respects, such as of the tactics of the communist and workers parties in the still struggling for power. It is a pity to say, which may become necessary and possible for a socialist state to enter into an agreement or alliance with an imperialist country to another, in order to defend against the attacks of other imperialist power or powers, it is suicidal for the communists of that particular country or countries, which are temporary allies of socialist states or states to cooperate with the said socialist state. Why attempt to establish the relations of the ruling Communist parties with those of capitalist countries, all in the name of the international unity of the world movement and in the interests of proletarian internationalism, proves disastrous for the unity and further progress of the world communist movement. It is a pity to say, in the world imperialist race, headed by the U.S.A. and its tactics of American imperialism, the U.S.A. along with the U.S.S.R. and some other socialist countries, but was dead set against admitting Peoples' China into the U.N. On denying its rightful place in the world body, the permanent members of the Security Council. This tactic of U.S.A. and its imperialist allies continued for a full twenty years. Is it any wonder that this tactic of the imperialists will have different impact and impact on the thinking of the leaders of the Soviet Union and People's Republic of China though it was a common factor both the Socialist States to mutually consult and coordinate their activities in this regard. It is a pity to say, in the period of the 1950s when the relations between the Government of India and the Soviet Union and People's China were at their best.

## *Differences and Splits in the Indian Communist Movement*

The two splits of 1964 and 1968 in the Indian Communist movement have divided the ranks of the once United Communist Party of India into three segments. One is the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which broke away with the Communist Party of India in 1964; the second is the Communist Party of India which is characterised as the Right CPI and the third is the section that broke away from the CPI (M) and formed into what is named as the CPI (Marxist-Leninist) but popularly known as Naxalites of different shades.

Very often we come across the arguments by many well intentioned friends and sympathisers of Communism that after all the differences are only regarding the means and methods of achieving the revolution, that all the three segments have the common aim of overthrowing capitalism and establishing socialism, and that it is good in the interests of the Indian Socialist Revolution that all the three should unite, subordinating the differences to the supreme needs of the common ideal. To be frank, such views emanate from a superficial examination of the issues of difference and from a purely subjective desire for unity of all the revolutionary forces. Common aims and objectives will not lead us very far unless there are commonly accepted theories, principles and tactics to achieve the common aims and objectives. A cursory examination of the differences in the Indian Communist movement would convince any serious political student that these differences relate to many fundamental issues of the Indian revolution—the class analysis and assessment of the State power, the nature and character of the Indian revolution, the perspective path of our revolution, the class strategy for it, the assessment of the present political situation and the tactics, forms of organisation and struggle, etc.

To begin with is the issue of State power in India which has come to exist since the transfer of power in August, 1947. It is the ABC of Marxism that the key question in any revolution is the question of state power as it is the central issue determining everything in the revolution and its development. That is why Marxists talk of state and revolution; if they are not clear as to which class or classes are holding political power there can be no intelligent participation in the work of organising for the revolution, let alone leading it to successful conclusion.

What are the three different class assessments of the present Indian State power by the CPI (M), the CPI and the Naxalites respectively. The CPI (M) holds the view firstly that it is a bourgeois and landlord state power secondly that the big and medium bourgeoisie is the leading force of the State power thirdly the big bourgeoisie is allied with landlordism and sharing power with it in order to suppress its political and economic growth. The big bourgeoisie is also collaborating with foreign monopoly capital with a view to building capitalism in India and lastly its internal and external policies are guided by the basic interest of the classes



Government, and the adoption of such organisational methods as to recruit any and every willing person into its party in thousands and lakhs, are some of the manifestations of the techniques of the Right CPI. It allied with the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Tamilnadu to secure some assembly and Parliament seats in the years 1971 and broke away from that alliance in 1972-73; it allied with Akali Dal, Bharatiya Kranti Dal and even Jana Sangh in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab in 1967-69 to form anti-Congress Governments and deserted all those allies when it forged an alliance with the ruling Congress in Uttar Pradesh, Orissa and Manipur to secure some seats while it thought fit to ally with the Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Pondichery against the ruling Congress and its ally the opposition Congress. All these unprincipled alliances and opportunist tactics are not fortuitous, the total abandonment of revolutionary political line and consequently the giving up of revolutionary organisation, form of struggle and techniques is the inevitable logic.

The Right CP leaders and their international patrons frequently and constantly swear by Lenin and cite the instance of Lenin's advocacy of peaceful transition of power during July-August days of 1917, to prove their theses of peaceful transition under the present epoch. They also cite Marx's statements about England and certain other countries of Europe and the continent regarding the possibilities of peaceful transition to Socialist revolution during the middle of the 19th century and then argue that their theses of peaceful transition through the parliamentary path is not inconsistent with Marxism-Leninism, and in fact it is the creative application of Marxism to the present international conditions. They clearly avoid the examination of the concrete conditions of state power and its relation to the peaceful or non-peaceful path of revolution, an examination that was the basis for the said statements of Marx and Lenin. Lenin repeats time and again as to how the modern bourgeois States have been building up monstrous military and police apparatus, and how the practice of violence against the workers and toilers has become universal. He says that

it cannot be denied that in individual cases, by way of exception, for instance, in some small country after the Social revolution has been accomplished in a neighbouring big country, peaceful surrender of power by the bourgeoisie is *possible*, if it is convinced that resistance is hopeless and if it prefers to save its skin. It is much more likely, of course, that even in small states Socialism will not be achieved without civil war, and for that reason the only programme of international Social Democracy must be recognition of Civil War, though violence is, of course, alien to our ideals.<sup>5</sup>

The ridiculous part of the story is that the Right revisionists, on an international scale, were propagating that Allende's Government coming into power in Chile is a confirmation of their theses of peaceful transition to socialism, even though that Government of Allende was neither able

to secure the majority of votes in the country nor secure real power—the support of the armed forces which alone constitutes the core of state power. To equate any electoral victory with the State power, in its real sense, is nothing but making a mockery of Marxism. And yet such is the manner in which “creative” Marxism is being developed.

Take another issue, the concept of proletarian hegemony. In the modern society, as Marx and Engels put it long ago, the two decisive classes are the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Lenin says,

The proletariat is the only consistently revolutionary class of contemporary society, it must be the leader, the hegemon in the struggle of the whole people for a complete democratic revolution, in the struggle of all the toilers and exploited against the oppressors and exploiters. The proletariat is revolutionary only in so far as it is conscious of this idea of hegemony and acts upto it. The proletarian who has become conscious of this task is a slave who has risen against slavery. The proletarian who is not conscious of the idea that his class must be the hegemon, or who renounces this idea, is a slave who does not realise his slavish condition; at least he is a slave who fights to improve his condition as a slave, but not for the overthrow of slavery.<sup>4</sup>

This alone expounds the idea of proletarian hegemony in the sharpest form possible: The Right CPI leaders, contrary to all these teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, have invented what is known as ‘joint hegemony’ of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in their ill-conceived concept of National Democratic State and Government, a transitional stage to socialism. Can vulgarisation of Marxism go any further?

In a bourgeois-landlord dominated social order, it is the bourgeois ideology, politics, culture, philosophy and outlook that dominate the people, including the proletariat. The proletariat as a class becomes an organised and conscious force in so far as it frees itself from the political ideological influence of the bourgeoisie and in so far as it weans away the peasantry and the middle classes to its fold from the pernicious influence and grip of the bourgeoisie and its world outlook. The struggle for proletariat hegemony is a head-on and frontal struggle against the bourgeoisie: either the classes, sections and groups of people between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, are under the bourgeois hegemony or the proletarian hegemony: there cannot be proletarian hegemony until the bourgeois hegemony is dislodged, and to conceive of the joint hegemony of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is to conceive to reconcile the irreconcilable concept.

The very idea of building a National Democratic Front, as the Right CPI puts it, is a front of the working class, peasantry, the urban middle class and the non-big bourgeoisie. Such a united democratic front is organised, built and led by only the proletarian class, and no other class is destined to play the role of a leader for such a front. It comes into existence in the course of frontal struggle against the political, ideological and

organisational influence of the big bourgeoisie, landlords and their yesmen and there is no other way of forging such a front or forming such a front government. Then from where comes the novel idea of joint hegemony? This monstrous concept is conceived to cover up the class collaboration with the bourgeoisie, and to hide the ugly fact of accepting the hegemony of the capitalist class, by a shameful surrender to it.

As such what is the rationale in the argument that the aims and objectives of the Right CPI and CPI (M) are similar, that is, the achieving of socialism and communism; they differ from each other only with regard to the "technique" and why not resolve the differences of the techniques of the revolution and unite to achieve the common aims and objectives of both !

Aims may look similar, but the concept of joint hegemony leads to the acceptance of bourgeois leadership while the concept of proletarian hegemony declares war against the bourgeois leadership. Joint hegemony stands for capitalist slavery, instead of proletarian revolution.

### *C P I (M) and its Critique of Left Opportunism*

The Naxalites assess the class character of the present Indian State power, as being a puppet State and Government of the U S imperialists. They assert that the Indian bourgeoisie, which is in power at the sufferance of U S imperialism, is a comprador bourgeoisie and as such it is a lackey of imperialism. The real political power, according to them, is wielded by the U S A and hence the Indian revolution is a National Liberation Revolution.

CPI (M) is totally opposed to these views of the Naxalites regarding the character and nature the ruling Indian bourgeoisie, class character of the Indian state power, and the nature of the Indian revolution. Imperialist stranglehold, of the US in particular, is surely there in our State and Government; but to stretch it to the point of reducing the Indian state and Government to the status of U S puppet and stooge is obviously wrong. It is to deny the big reality that there has come to exist and grow in India a powerful industrial big bourgeoisie, which is in the leadership of the state power, and utilising that state power to bargain between the two world camps of socialism and imperialism, in order to develop capitalism and strengthen its hold on the country.

There are certainly some national liberation tasks for the Indian revolution, chiefly the task of eliminating the economic hold of the foreign monopoly capital and its exploitation of our national resources. But from it to deduce that there is no political independence, that the stage of the revolution is once again the stage of general national united front, as was the case before the transfer of power in 1947, is utterly unrealistic and factually wrong.

Any truth extended beyond its application can be reduced to an absurdity. The case with the Naxalites falls into that category. The

defining of the character and stage of the Indian revolution as that of a national liberation revolution, and then, on that basis, to proceed with a class strategy which directs against the U S imperialists and their alleged stooges of the Indian comprador bourgeoisie and landlords, clearly omits the big industrial Indian bourgeoisie from making it a target of attack, and exaggerates the scope and sweep of the national liberation tasks.

From such an exaggerated and false picture emerge the slogans of national liberation war, people's war of liberation and the immediate unleashing of the peasant partisan armed struggle etc.

Here the so-called technique of the Indian revolution is inseparably linked up with the nature of the Indian revolution that is, war of national liberation. For this technique, its advocates bank upon two big currents, namely, agrarian revolutionary current and the national liberation current: If the real State power rests with the U S imperialism and it is being manned by its lackeys of the comprador bourgeoisie and landlords, then there exists some theoretical truth for the slogan of people's war of liberation; but when that truth itself is exaggerated, distorted and perverted—the entire theses of liberation war falls to the ground, and in practice it gets emasculated.

The second biggest fallacy of the Naxalites, in advocating the immediate unleashing of the partisan peasant armed struggle, is in their assessment of the political situation, of the degree and maturity of the revolutionary crisis and of the level of consciousness, organisation and unity of the peasant masses who are objectively interested in carrying out the agrarian revolution. In all these respects there are definite and unerring Marxist-Leninist guidelines, to gauge whether the situation is ripe or not for calling forth the immediate peasant partisan armed struggle: Naxalites discard these guidelines, and arrive at their own highly subjective conclusions. They try to buttress their political line by drawing support from the so-called Thought of Mao Tse-Tung, which according to them is the Marxism-Leninism of the present epoch.

They, on their own estimation of the national political situation and assessment of the alignment of class forces, tried to unleash partisan peasant armed struggles, particularly in the tribal areas such as Naxalbari in West Bengal and Parvatipuram and Palwancha in Andhra Pradesh. Life and history has shown how their estimation of the revolutionary situation was totally wrong, how it was an infantile error to try to unleash an Indian agrarian revolution basing mainly or solely on certain tribal pockets, cut off from the main agrarian revolutionary currents, how squad or individual armed actions, however brave and heroic, degenerate into individual or squad terrorism when mass peasant uprisings and participation are absent, and how such actions lead to the disruption of the incipient movements, bringing disunity and disorganisation in the party and decimation of the militant and advanced guard at the hands of the class enemy.

The difference between the Naxalites and the CPI (M) is not as the Naxalites present, regarding the possibility or otherwise of the peaceful transition to socialism, through parliamentary path. The CPI (M) does not have any constitutional or parliamentary illusions. But it certainly disagrees with the Naxalite theory of anarchic boycott of Legislatures, a boycott without any relation to the estimation of the political situation, and a boycott on the absurd premise that work in the State Legislatures and Parliament by the proletarian revolutionaries breeds reformism and revisionism.

The CPI (M) while not entertaining any illusions of peaceful transition, that is, the bourgeois-landlord Government accepting the democratic verdict of the people and peacefully surrendering political power without resorting to the use of violence, deems it prudent and correct to declare it is striving to achieve it peacefully. The CPI (M) does not want to give an alibi to the class enemies to go on deceiving the people that they stand for non-violence, whereas Marxists stand for violence and bloodshed; the CPI (M) does not want to provide a handle to the class enemies of the proletariat to spread the totally false propaganda that Marxists believe in the cult of violence, though in reality "violence is alien to our ideals" as Lenin correctly puts it. Marxists believe in the proletarian revolution, and in the use of varied means, methods and forms of struggle so that the revolutionaries might successfully counter the class enemy's methods and forms of struggle to crush the revolution.

The Marxist party's firm disapproval of individual terrorism, squad terrorism, premature organisation of insurrections and attempts at minority conspiracies and coups is in complete conformity with Marxism-Leninism. If on this count the party is named as right revisionist and neo-revisionists, the label does not stick to it. Those who have been revising Marxism to the right and 'left', have to be sought elsewhere, not in the present policy and programme of the CPI (M).

Regarding the 'techniques' of the Indian revolution there had been a prolonged discussion inside the Indian communist movement during the years 1948-52. Some advocated that our revolution too would follow the classical pattern of the Russian Revolution, that is uprising of the working class in cities with a view to capture the main centres of power, transport and communications, and its spread to the rural areas to liberate them. Others, from the experience of the then Telangana Peasant Armed uprising, argued that it was bound to be different from the Russian model, and was more likely to develop on the lines of the Chinese Revolution, that is first liberating the rural areas, by creating and building a liberation army through a prolonged peasant partisan war, and then liberating the cities for the final triumph of revolution. Later it was decided that it would be wrong either to mechanically copy the Russian model or the Chinese model, since, in the conditions of India, there were some essential differences from both, though there were many things to learn and

apply from both. Neither the Russian path nor the Chinese path was wholly applicable but its own Indian path, depending upon the concrete national and international conditions that might obtain at the time of such a revolution. It was pointed out that India, unlike in the China of 1930s and 40s, there are developed industrial centres, cities, means of modern communications and a sizable urban working class population all of which are bound to have their own special impact and influence on the course of revolutionary struggle and its techniques. Similarly, it was also pointed out that India has certain essential common features with China, that is, a huge peasant population, as nearly 70 per cent of the people are living in the rural areas and the agrarian revolution was likely to be the axis of the Indian revolution, whether it is named as People's Democratic Revolution or National Democratic Revolution. Hence it was decided that a combination of both the experiences with appropriate and necessary changes would become inevitable, and the working class party and the people will have to be educated and organised on these lines. The CPI (M) is of the opinion that by and large, these conclusions are correct and are valid even now.

But one thing is very important while discussing the topic of revolutionary techniques. Just as revolutionaries try to learn from the experiences and lessons of different revolutions in different countries of the world—both from the successful and unsuccessful ones—the counter-revolutionaries too, drawing on lessons of all revolutionary struggles in the world, are constantly revising, improving and perfecting their counter-revolutionary forms of struggle and technology. Note also needs to be taken of the tremendous growth of technology—what is being popularly called the technological revolution, and its influence on the techniques of the revolution, although in the final analysis, it is the man, his consciousness and organisation that act as the decisive forces in the matter of social revolution.

However, the placing of undue and highly exaggerated emphasis on the question of revolutionary techniques, and an abstract discussion on it, even to the exclusion of several other fundamental questions to be taken into account, is obviously wrong. It is a tendency of petty-bourgeois revolutionarism and ultra-'left' sectarianism.

Any discussion of the revolutionary techniques, divorced from such key questions such as the degree of consciousness and organisation of the revolutionary working class, its alliance with the toiling peasant masses and other middle classes and its preparedness for a revolutionary onslaught etc., would derail the revolutionaries from attending to the most urgent and basic tasks, reducing them to the "revolutionary phrase makers." The consciousness and organisation of the masses, act as the decisive forces and not the techniques, however superb they are.

The tendency to draw easy parallels and to copy is irresistible, particularly with the youthful enthusiasts and immature revolutionaries;

Some communists in the 1920s tended to think that the Russian Revolution of 1917 was won by a surprise attack of the well organised industrial workers, and the same could be repeated in several countries of Europe. It would be instructive here to cite a passage from Lenin:

We have heard here that in Czechoslovakia the Communist Party has 300,000 to 400,000 members, and that it is essential to win over the majority, to create an invincible force and continue enlisting fresh masses of workers. Terracini is already prepared to attack. He says if there are already 400,000 workers in the party, why should we want more? He is afraid of the word 'masses' and wants to eradicate it. Comrade Terracini has understood very little of the Russian Revolution. In Russia, we were a small party, but we had with us in addition the majority of the Soviet of workers and peasants' deputies throughout the country. Do you have any thing of the sort? We had with us almost half the army, which then numbered at least ten million men. Do you really have the majority of the army behind you? Show me such a country!

Emphasising the same point he adds:

We are victorious in Russia not only because the undisputed majority of the working class was on our side (during the election in 1917 the overwhelming majority of the workers were with us against Mensheviks), but also half the army, immediately after the seizure of power, and nine tenths of the peasants in the course of some weeks came over to our side.

Without a thorough going preparation you will not achieve victory in any country. Quite a small party is sufficient to lead the masses. At certain times there is no necessity for big organisation.

We must, therefore, win over to our side not only the majority of the working class, but also the majority of the working and exploited rural population. Have you prepared for this? Almost nowhere.<sup>6</sup>

This passage is self explanatory and it needs no further elaboration.

Some comrades in India and in other countries of the world drawing extremely lopsided and ill digested lessons from the revolutions of China, Cuba and Vietnam, have been arguing and advocating different techniques of revolutionary struggle, techniques which do not take into account the working class and its role, do not take into consideration the class alignment of the forces in a given situation. They do not care to assess the national and international situation and do not concretely study the conditions that enable these revolutions: Heroism of the individuals, the organisation of the armed squads, the topographical conditions that enable the relatively free movement of the armed squads, and a radical agrarian revolutionary programme—these, according to them, are the only decisive factors to unleash a peasant partisan war or a "people's liberation war". They do not care to examine what particular national and international situation was there for the Chinese revolution to help its victorious out-

come; they do not even care to assess the role and significance of the army that defected to the side of revolution in China during 1927; they also do not analyse the concrete conditions that gave the revolution its depth and sweep; and they minimise the revolutionary significance of the national factor which came to the top with Japanese imperialist aggression and conquest of Chinese territory.

Everything is sought to be reduced into a mere question of revolutionary technique to make or mar a revolution. The glaring example of such a line of thinking can be had from Régis Debray's "Revolution in the Revolution", a book that became a Bible for many revolutionary militants for some time.

He writes things which are fantastically absurd, to put it mildly. What Marxist outlook is there in his utterances such as

The mountain proletarianises the bourgeois and peasant elements, and the city can bourgeoisify the proletarians.

The ruling class possessed all the means for repressing and crushing a general strike but these same resources were of no avail against guerilla warfare.

Wherever armed struggle is the order of the day, there is a close tie between biology and ideology; and

The vanguard party can exist in the form of the guerrilla Foco itself and the guerilla force is the party in embryo<sup>6</sup>.

Working class and its role is negated; the concept of proletarian hegemony is negated; the role of the masses is denigrated; and the individual heroes and groups are acclaimed as "ignitors of revolutions" and "liberators" of the dumb masses!

It is said Mr Debray had repudiated most of these theories while he visited Chile, under the regime of the late Allende. One does not know where this celebrated "revolutionary" writer stands at the present time; at any rate despite all his ravings regarding the revolutionary techniques, there is neither Marxism nor proletarian revolution in this theses of Mr Régis Debray.

The Naxalites say that they do not agree with Debray and his treatise. But there has not appeared any systematic criticism of Debray's work by the Naxalites.

There are certain fallacies in the very world outlook of the Naxalites of different shades—an outlook that comes into total rupture with the Marxist-Leninist analysis and assessment of the contemporary world.

They say that Marxism-Leninism, as interpreted by MaoTse-Tung alone is the scientific and creative Marxism of our epoch, and Mao's latest analysis and assessment of the world differs fundamentally with the analysis and assessment made by the two world communist meetings of 1957 and 1960, in which Chinese Communist Party too was an active participant, endorsing the two documents. It is being propagated that Socialist Soviet Union is transformed into Social Imperialism and Fascism. This is

is completely wrong. There are certainly some serious mistakes, shortcomings, distortions and deviations in the construction of Socialism in the Soviet Union, and its domestic and foreign policies. But to say that socialism has transformed into imperialism and fascism etc. is contrary to truth. The basic means of production in the Soviet Union are socialised, they continue to be socially owned and no proof is adduced to show that private property is restored in Soviet Union and that Capitalism and Imperialism have developed there.

On the premise that Socialism is transformed into Social imperialism in the USSR it is being propagated that world socialist camp and international socialist system is no more in existence. Granting for argument's sake that Soviet Union is outside the Socialist system, on what grounds can one write off the rest of the Socialist countries, including Socialist China and say that there does not exist a Socialist camp? No grounds, except assertion!

It is said the earlier classification of the world into the two camps, the camp of Imperialism and Socialism is no more valid, and that there are now three parts or three worlds, namely, the imperialist and social imperialist super-powers of USA and USSR in one camp; the second comprising of all the under developed and developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, including Socialist China and the third consisting of all the developed capitalist States (imperialist States) such as Britain, France, West Germany, Italy, Japan and the rest. We reject this division as a non-class and anti-Marxist division of the States, the division that discounts the socio-economic systems to be taken into account. It is being asserted that the so-called Third World countries have become the main motive forces of the world revolution. This analysis is false as it speaks of countries and not in terms of classes; the main motive force of our epoch is the socialist camp and the international working class. The national liberation forces of the world are a component part of the world socialist revolution and not the motive force or propelling force as is being asserted.

### *Conclusion*

When earlier mentioned that not only world capitalism is in general crisis, but the socialist world and world communist movement too is facing a different crisis, it is this present disunity, disruption and split in the world socialist camp and communist movement, that is referred to.

The reasons and sources of these differences and deviations in the international communist movement were traced and the CPI(M) stand over these differences and deviations was evaluated.

One may ask how and when these disputes will be overcome, and how to unify the world revolutionary movement, and whether such a unity is ever possible at all?

This crisis in the international communist movement reflects the birth pangs of the old society pregnant with a new one. Again, another question is asked whether the child and the mother would be safe at all in

the face of this all embracing crisis which our generation is going through?

This is what Lenin said in a certain connection in June 1918.

Human child birth is an act which transforms the woman into an almost lifeless, blood-stained heap of flesh, tortured, tormented and driven frantic by pain. But can the "individual" that sees only this in love and its sequel, in the transformation of the woman into a mother, be regarded as a human being? Who would renounce love and procreation for this reason?

Severe travail greatly increases the danger of grave illness or of a fatal issue. But while individuals only may die in the act of child birth, the new society to which the old system gives birth cannot die; all that may happen is that the birth may be more painful, more prolonged and growth and development slower.

Let the "Socialist" snivelers croak, let the bourgeoisie rage and fume, but only people who shut their eyes so as not to see, and stuff their ears so as not to hear, can fail to notice that all over the world the birth pangs of the old capitalist society, which is pregnant with Socialism, have begun.<sup>7</sup>

The above was said by Lenin some full fifty years ago. How green it is, and how objective and scientific it sounds, even today. Such is the Marxist-Leninist outlook that should guide and sustain our generation and its revolutionary zeal.

*(This paper was read at the Seminar conducted by the Bertrand Russell Society at Hyderabad on 14th May, 1974.)*

<sup>1</sup> V I Lenin, "Marxism and Revisionism," *Against Revisionism*, Moscow Publishers, 1966

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> V I Lenin, "Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism", *Against Revisionism*, Moscow Publishers, 1966

<sup>4</sup> V I Lenin, "Reformism in the Russian Social Democratic Movement," *Collected Works*, Vol 17, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1963.

<sup>5</sup> V I Lenin, Speech in Deference of the Tactics of the Communist International July 1, 1921, *Speeches at the Congress of the Communist International*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1972.

<sup>6</sup> Regis Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution*, Penguin Books.

<sup>7</sup> V I Lenin, "Prophetic Words," *Collected Works*, Vol 27, Foreign Languages Publishing House.

## NOTE

### *Theme of Class Exploitation and Capitalistic Injustice in the Indo-Anglian Novel*

IT wasn't the Taj Mahal, the ghats of Banaras, the temple at Madurai or the mountains of Travancore that had moved me: it was the peasant terribly emaciated, with nothing to cover his nakedness but a rag around the middle...That was the sight that had given me the most poignant emotion in India.

Somerset Maugham wrote after a visit to India years ago. And the pity is that the social and economic conditions of the peasants and the working class continue to be the same though years have gone by and the nation has 'proudly' celebrated the silver jubilee of its independence. The commonplace observation is that the rich have become richer and the poor have become poorer. Class exploitation and capitalistic injustice continue to flourish unabated. This has left scars of different shapes on almost all spheres of activities in India. How do our literatures reflect this struggle? Quite a few writers seem to have made haphazard attempts to focus on this injustice. While Tarasankar, K S Karanth, Thakazhi, and Munshi Premchand have made blistering attacks on these social evils in regional literatures, Anand, Abbas, Markandaya, Bhattacharya, Khushwant Singh and a few others have taken up the struggle in the Indo Anglian novel. We have gifted writers with proletarian outlook but strangely enough, the initial commitment is missing in their later writings. Who is to be blamed for this? The novelist, the reading public or the critics? In a country where it is fashionable to describe any popular movement against the forces of suppression as antinational and Marxist-supported, the literary works that depict man's injustice to man stand the risk of being condemned as communist propaganda.

The Indo-Anglian Novel, despite its late start, has gone ahead of the other branches both in quality and quantity. The quantity of Indian writing in English has considerably increased during the last four decades. Though English has become as much an Indian language as Hindi, Panjabi, Tamil or Malayalam for that matter, the Indo-Anglians by and large have been writing for the middle class and upper class readers. There is even a criticism that most of the novels have been written with a western

readership in mind. Many of the Indo-Anglians are better known outside than in the country of their birth. We cannot assume that many of their novels find enthusiastic readers not because of their intrinsic merits but for the picture of India the western reading public gets from these novels. The India of their knowledge and imagination is a land of contradictions: a land of Sadhus, abject poverty, political chaos, socio-economic disparities, untouchability communal disharmony, magnificent temples, mysterious caves, frightening forests, and snake charmers. The western reader will be generous enough to hail a work of art 'as the most satisfying and magnificent piece of writing in the century' if it is crowded with all these. Barring a few, most of the Indo-Anglian novels were first published abroad and even the Indian editions have appeared only much later. A book is sure to catch the eye of many readers and critics if it is lauded in the west. This explains why many of our writers are eager to get opinions from western critics and scholars. One of the glaring anomalies in the Indian character is that we recognize merit only after it has been lauded in the west. The producers and the directors of Indian movies have also learned this trick. At least half a dozen Indian movies were first released in recent times in cities like London, New York or Paris and our newspapers were full of what the public of these cities said of these movies. And these movies were released in India only at a later period after winning laurels from the westerners. (Who knows that the sensitive westerners are not laughing at the craze seen in Indians to get recognition?)

The contemporary Indo-Anglian fiction shows the presence of different streams accommodating a wide range of concerns. As Meenakshi Mukherjee, a critic of Indo-Anglian fiction has put it, the Indo-Anglian novelist is not sure of his ground. He is in a dilemma. He is also an individual in the society, not a separate entity. However hard he tries, he is caught up in the currents and cross-currents of the social life around him. The very same faculty that makes him a writer will compel him to react in one way or other to these developments. He develops different approaches to this tricky situation. The pen becomes his instrument. He can blow it hot and cold. Even then he will have a doubt as to which side he should support. What is the defect—lack of purpose or dedication? The reason is that most of our writers are too sensitive to criticism. The academic critics who have learnt to assess a work of art only on the principles laid down by Aristotle, Eliot, Richards or any other critic for that matter, forgetting that the soul of literary criticism is *sahridayatvam* will see the true picture of society only as propaganda. Of course this does not mean a work of art should be reduced to the level of a political tract. A writer is not a pamphleteer or an historian. But does this mean that only fantastic and impossible-to-swallow stories should find a place in literature and it should be assessed with worn-out and insufficient yardsticks? It is time that we stopped assessing our literatures with western standards. This does not mean that we need not go in for universal standards. We should integrate

what we have learnt from the west with our own tradition. Most of our critics who swear in the name of TS Eliot for the function of criticism seem to have forgotten what Eliot thought of it. According to him the critic's function is to "help his reader to understand and enjoy it."<sup>1</sup> The Indo-Anglian novelist in his anxiety to establish himself seems to have understood that he should be at truce with the western readers and the Indian critic ignoring the real problems in India. What Walter Allen said of the European novelists appears to be true of the Indo-Anglians.

They write, they think, for all sorts of reasons: to reform the morals of the age like Fielding; to expose current social evils, like Dickens to make money like Balzac; they frequently believe they are great reformers or deep thinkers.<sup>2</sup>

The novel has become an effective instrument for social change in the hands of at least a few novelists. It is heartening to note that these enthusiastic novelists seem to have made daring attempts in the artistic rendering of the contemporary social reality. These novelists use the medium as a form of social protest for a vigorous delineation of the truth of contemporary life. In their attempt to reject the diseased and decadent part of Indian tradition, they vehemently oppose the forces of conformity, reaction and obscurantism. The central themes, of this group of writers comprising stalwarts like Mulk Raj Anand, K A Abbas, Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya and Khushwant Singh are political dependence, class exploitation, caste distinction, capitalistic injustice, the abysmal poverty, growing disillusionment, corruption at higher levels and the indifference of the government to the suffering of the people. The approaches of these writers are not identical. With their strong commitment to the eradication of these evils, these writers seek to give a shock treatment to our society which continues to be essentially feudal in its outlook.

Mulk Raj Anand has emerged as the most powerful and effective advocate of the down-trodden and the underprivileged. He has been a fierce critic of the existing social evils and is totally committed to the war the working class and the other weaker and exploited sections have been waging to stop exploitation. He has shown that as a writer he has a duty to his society and if he does not take an active part in the process of alleviating the sufferings of the people, he is misusing the medium. He is the first Indo-Anglian novelist who seems to have followed what Albert Solomon has said.

The novel emerges as a new literary form, not because bourgeoisie patrician and people as such are different from the knights of chivalrous romance, but because sociological awareness, the totally new factor becomes the focussing element of plot. In the simplest possible terms, society is now the destiny of the individual; the horizon under which the individual lives is determined by the pressure, power and control of society.<sup>3</sup>

And about his own technique Anand says, When I began to write novels about India, though I took Joyce's 'stream of consciousness' as my method, I had to apply it to a different situation, revealed to me by my upbringing in a province of the British Empire. I had the hunch that man's position in the world, his relationship to the Universe and to himself, were important if one wanted to see the meaning of life. One could just wish away human beings and lull oneself to calm with the music of Anna Livia Plurabelle. In my own country where the position of man had not emerged beyond the speck in the dust of Maya, to the potential humanness of the individual which democracy invited against the long suppression of feudalism, orthodoxy and institutionalised religion, I felt that the novel should not press the inner monologue beyond a certain point, so that humanness may remain a variable factor in the situation. Finnegans Wake, the antinovel novelists and the obstructionists concentrated on style and construction so emphatically as to sterilize creation. I therefore felt around for a synthesis of techniques between the west and the inner consciousness, analysed by Sri Aurobindo, hoping that man, forsaken by the gods and other men and women, broken decimated by the Machine-Money-War civilisation, could be seen at least in profile, in the enchanted mirror, in order to illumine his awareness against maturity, dead matterliness and suppression by society and shown in his confrontation of fate.<sup>4</sup>

Anand's *Coolie* is a daring attempt in this direction and its world of the proletarian misery and wretchedness coupled with capitalist exploitation shook the conscience of the society. The protagonist of the novel, Munoo, an orphaned village boy from Kangra Hills who sets out with boyish enthusiasm in search of a livelihood, does not appear to be a single individual but only one of the millions of such boys whose birthright is denied. Munoo,

had heard how the landlord had seized his father's five acres of land because the interest on the mortgage covering the unpaid rent had not been forthcoming when the rains had been scanty and the harvests bad. And he knew how his father had died a slow death of bitterness and disappointment and left his mother a penniless mother, to support a child in arms.<sup>5</sup>

In his desperate attempts to live he became a domestic servant but later had to escape from there when he was kicked and beaten for no offence. Society was not kind to this poor and helpless boy whose ambition was

I want to live, I want to know, I want to work, . . . I shall grow up and be a man, a strong man like the wrestler.<sup>6</sup>

He continued his heroic fight even when he was knocked down by all the forces of suppression. He finds a job in Bombay city at the New George Cotton Mill at a very poor wage. Despite its metropolitan characteristics Bombay remains to be a feudal city with its squalor, extreme class division

and corruption of different types. The dirt and squalor in which the factory workers live is portrayed vividly by the novelist. The factory is a hell for young Munoo and his comrades. Jimmie, the foreman makes their lives more miserable when he exploits the already exploited and starving mill workers. Inspired by the news of international class struggle, these suppressed and half-starved workers organise themselves and demand better service conditions and higher wages. They organise a strike but the employers succeed in converting the labour meeting into a scene of communal disturbances. The workers' strike is easily broken and the net result is that many of the labourers lose their lives and a large number face victimisation. What the Communist leader Sauda says becomes prophetic,

There are only two kinds of people in the world, the rich and the poor and between the two there is no connection. The rich and the powerful, the magnificent and glorious, whose opulence is built on robbery and theft and open warfare, are honoured and admired by the whole world, and by themselves. You, the poor and humble, you the meek and gentle, wretches that you are, swindled out of your rights, and broken in body and soul, you are respected by no one and you don't respect yourselves.<sup>7</sup>

This unfortunate boy who was very much in love with life catches tuberculosis and dies at the age of sixteen. Mother earth receives him with a groan, "We belong to suffering, we belong to suffering! My love."

The lot of Munoo appears to be better than Bakha, the *Untouchable*, who leads actually a life in death. Every movement means death to him. He is not sure whether he is alive or not. But the stark realities make him feel that he is not dead. The problem Anand highlights in this novel is the age old evil of the segregation of an individual for following the hereditary profession. The novel was written in 1935. The events it relates have not only relevance in the India of 1935 but it is prophetic in that it is equally applicable to the India of 1974. Anand's *Untouchable* was so provocative and out-rageous even to the publishers, that by September 1934 the novel had been turned down by nineteen publishers and the author contemplated suicide, but was saved by the poet Orwell Blakeston, who persuaded Wishart Books to accept it. The book was accepted on the condition that E M Forster would write a preface to protect it against being called 'dirty.' Forster not only quickly supplied the preface, but insisted that Anand should accept the fee.<sup>8</sup> The novel proved to be a strong indictment of the powers that be. It describes a day in the life of a young sweeper boy who has been denied even a chance for a free and open-air walk. While he is walking munching and looking at the sights in the town a man brushes past him. A shout follows;

Why don't you call, you swine and announce your approach! Do you know you have touched and defiled me, cock-eyed son of a low-legged scorpion! Now I will have to go and take a bath to purify myself.<sup>9</sup>

It was the man who touched the boy who abuses him; the innocent untouchable is humiliated and beaten for no sin of his. To the surprise of this boy a Muslim comes to his rescue. Thereafter he announces, "Posh, posh, sweeper coming. Posh, posh, sweeper coming." Cursing his lot he reaches the temple. There to his amazement he sees the Brahmin priest trying to molest his beautiful sister, Sohini. He foils the attempt and the frustrated priest escapes into the crowd shouting that he has been polluted. This is not the end of the torturous experience for him. Later in the day when he approaches certain houses for food he realises that there is no food for the scavenger who cleans their latrines but enough for the 'holy man' who walks about with the 'ready made' blessings of God. The novel ends with his examining the three propositions put to him by three different men: a conversion to Christianity, abolition of untouchability and Flush latrine.

*Two Leaves and a Bud* appears to be a sequel to *Coolie* and it starts where *Coolie* ends. As Dr Krishna Rao put it,

In both the novels the protagonist represents the predicament of the proletariat as a 'class', in the former set in a vast formless and indifferent society, and in the other in a cruel capitalistic environment. The mania of racial superiority and superciliousness of the ruling class aggravates the situation in the latter novel and the free moving Munoo of *Coolie* is virtually enslaved in the Tea Estates in *Two Leaves and a Bud*. And every attempt to escape is violently put down by the planters. Dela Hawre, one of the characters, feels that the position of the plantation coolies in India is in many respects similar to that of the cotton plantation slaves of the Southern states of North America, of whom Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.<sup>10</sup>

In fact the strength of these two novels lies in the novelist's compassion for the labourers and his indignation at the exploitation of these poor and helpless people by the forces of capitalism, industrialism and communalism. To expose the tyranny, Anand takes us to the luxuriant forests of Assam amidst the slavish plight of the labourers of a tea plantation. The coolies were treated like beasts and their wives and daughters were carved out to be certain soulless machines for the easily excited lust of their masters. The plantation becomes a hothouse for the labourers. The conflict deepens with the labourers resorting to agitational methods to end exploitation and the owners determined to keep the worker under their thumbs. But there is at least one well-meaning person, Dr. Harve, who notes,

Why didn't it occur to anyone—the simple obvious thing that people don't need to read Marx to realize here? The black coolies clear the forests, plant the fields, toil and garner the harvest. While all the money grabbing, slave-driving soulless managers and directors draw their salaries and dividends and build up monopolies.

Scores of other novelists have also dwelt upon the theme of exploitation of labour both in the regional literatures and Indo-Anglian literature. Though Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is a study of the Gandhian Revolution, the banner of Revolution the coolies of Skeffington Coffee Estate raise is more than a symbol of the growing awareness on the part of the labourers that they should move to the warpath. In their eagerness to get themselves liberated from the forces of suppression the coolies move forward defying death. The magic of the slogan, *Inquilab Zindabad! Inquilab Zindabad!* becomes a burning symbol of the fire that is raging within them and is a serious warning that they will not tolerate exploitation any longer. The police shout,

"Stop or we shoot," "Shoot" answers one of the coolies, and a shot bursts at him and another and yet another and there are cries and gasps, and people beat their mouth and lament, and the crowd below feels so furious that shouting *Inquilab Zindabad*, they run forward and the police can stop them no more and they jump over field bunds and tumble against gas lights and fall over rocks and sheaf, sickles and scythes, three thousand men in all, and from the top of the Mound soldiers open fire.<sup>11</sup>

The brutal attack proved to be counter-productive and the flaying flames of revolution did not die out but spread devastatingly.

O, lift the flag high,  
Lift the flag high,  
This is the flag of Revolution.<sup>12</sup>

Apart from the casual references to the misery and poverty of the working class he makes, Raja Rao does not intend it to be a full length study of the problem of the working class. A similar treatment is made by Malgaonkar also in the *Combat of Shadows*.<sup>13</sup> As in Anand's *Coolie* the scene of action is an Assam Tea Estate owned by the British. Though evidently it is the story of an Englishman's moral disintegration and his subsequent death on the Indian soil, the novel offers the now-familiar tactics the bourgeoisie and capitalists adopt to crush trade union movements. The picture of the corrupt trade union leader who works his way up and eventually becomes the minister for plantations reflects the sorry state of politics in our country. Winton, the manager and adversary of the trade union leader rightly observed

God help India if people like you are to be elected to the assemblies. You are crooked, without a speck of decency, corrupt, and . . . and quite immoral, why you even offered to get me interested in your niece. With what face can anyone who would stoop as low as you go before the people and . . .

The labourers plan to go on a strike over the issue of getting one of the workers appointed as the Chief stockman.

"Your pay will be stopped from this moment" was the reply they got to their memorandum.

"Labourers have a right to present their grievances", said Mahipat (one of the labourers). "In Bilayat they were given the right to form labour unions many years ago. Labour people have been in government. Here all we ask for is justice. One of our men is superseded. That is wrong."

The manager replied, "Very well, then. From the moment, the seven of you are no longer in the employment of the company. By tomorrow morning I want your quarters vacated."<sup>14</sup> As the manager observes, this was a much bigger issue than a show of strength between himself and the workers; it was in the last analysis, a struggle between management and labour, between Dart and all that he stood for on the one side, and Jugal Kishore and his Bolshevism on the other. The repressive measures Winton adopts recall similar treatment of the theme of class warfare by Kesava Dev, a leading Malayalam novelist. A leader of the erstwhile progressive school of writers, Kesava Dev has written many novels and short stories on this theme. His *Mirror* depicts the plight of the workers of one of the coir factories in Kerala. These workers who have been working on starvation wages agitate for higher wages. The result is a foregone conclusion that they are harassed and victimised. Jayakanthan and Selvaraj, two of the progressive writers in Tamil have also attempted to highlight the proletarian misery. But the commitment and purposiveness exhibited by all these three writers are missing in their later writings, however much they swear in the name of the underprivileged and downtrodden.

The exploitation of the peasants by the feudal lords has also caught the attraction of the Indo-Anglians. At least a few of them seem to have understood that the agrarian unrest resulting from the cruel exploitation of the peasants and proletariat forms the basic cause of yet another injustice. The fate of several million peasants who do not own any piece of land to cultivate continues to be a serious blot on the nation's name. The dream of the Indian peasant has always been

Oh! darling, there will come a time  
When we will be the owners of  
The Land we till, the field we plough,  
And the crop that we harvest.

Shankar Ram's *Love of Dust* is a study of the extreme love of the farmer for the soil on which he is born, works and dies.

We love our fields and gardens as dearly as our own lives. And do you think that the love is not reciprocal? I tell you that they love us even more, because they have known our ancestors and also know that we have lost them. Every tree in the garden has a peculiar attraction to us which fools can't appreciate. Every fence, nay, the very ridges seem to recognize and extend a hearty welcome to us.

Oh, My boy! heartless men can never know these things.<sup>15</sup>

And the irony is that these peasants who work magic on the soil are perfectly at the mercy of feudal lords. The best approach to this inhuman

treatment is provided by Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, the celebrated Malayalam novelist, in his *Two Measures of Rice* where he explicitly advocates the imperative need for a class warfare to end the exploitation. The story is set in Kuttanad, the granary of Kerala. There cannot be a more agonising sight than the famished figure of a peasant who goes on without a drop of water for ten days. The life of the hero's father is summarised thus:

He was only a boy of eight when he joined as a farm hand in the service of a big farmer... Since then that farmer had become a millionaire... How many bushels of grain the old man had produced in his sixty-two years of life as a farm labourer! How many millions of people were fed from the fruits of this old man's labour! What a magnificent contribution to human life he had made! And now here he was dragging helplessly the burden of his miserable life through the last chapters of his earthly existence.<sup>16</sup>

Menon Marath's *The Sale of Island* is also a study of a group of people who live in Kuttanad. It has been their home for centuries. But all of a sudden they are asked to vacate the land. Faced with the threat of eviction, these sons of the soil resist the move. But how long can these farmers hold the fort in the face of power, money and brutal force? Written in two different media, these two novels, *Two Measures of Rice* and *The Sale of Island* deal with more or less similar problems. But the obvious difference is that whereas Thakazhi's novel is a touching and sincere picture of the injustice heaped on the peasants, Menon's can be read only for its documentary importance. Kamala Markandaya moves closer to Thakazhi through the sense of realism and touch of sincerity in her *Nectar in a Sieve* which is a success from an artistic point of view. The throbbing story of Nathan and Rukmini, two representatives of thousands of uprooted peasants of India, speaks volumes for rural poverty and misery. It is also a story of the peasants whose birthmark is sufferance. Here is a group of people who lead a hand-to-mouth existence from what their tenant holdings earn. With the establishment of a big tannery this little south Indian village with its peasant population is thrown to the mercy of the blood-sucking human jackals. Flood, drought and famine rush to the aid of the landlords, and businessmen who callously exploit the situation. The happy family of Nathan is uprooted wholly. He dies, his son runs away, his daughter resorts to prostitution and his wife is reduced to the status of a living fossil. She is even deprived of the small hut which her husband built for her.

This home, my husband had built for me with his own hands in the time he was waiting for me, brought me to it with a pride which I, used to better living, so nearly crushed. In it we had lain together, and children had been born. This hut with all its memories was to be taken from us, for it stood on land which belonged to another. And

the law itself by which we lived. It is a cruel thing, I thought. They don't know what they do to us.<sup>17</sup>

The scant regard the petty bourgeoisie attach to human lives and their tendency to rob even the dead ones appear to be the main theme of Bhabani Bhattacharya. His *So Many Hungers* is a brutally frank picture of the man-made hunger of Bengal in 1942. The famine took a toll of two million men, women and children while profiteers and hoarders made a thundering trade. Popular leaders were kept behind the bars leaving the hawks and eagles to be in charge of the scene. The familiar sight was

Corpses lay by the road, huddled together. Picked to the bones, with eyeless caverns of rockers, bits of skin and flesh rotting on nose and chin and ribs, the skulls pecked open, only their hair uneaten...Fellow human beings had ceased to care for the living: how could they care for the dead?

In a country where the living are burnt to death this is nothing strange. Indira Parthasarathi, a Tamil novelist has dramatised the most shocking tragedy in *Kuruthipunal* (Stream of Blood) that was enacted in 1969 in Kēezhvenmoni, a village in Tanjore district, where forty four Harijans were burnt to death by a landlord. It was a bloody climax to a series of confrontation between agricultural labourers and landlords in the years 1967-69.

The capitalists' technique of buying off the intellectuals who they think would oppose them is brilliantly portrayed by K. A. Abbas in one of his latest novels, *When Night Falls*. It is also a daring attempt to expose the ugly emptiness and hypocrisy of the upper strata of our society. The impression that money can buy everything is challenged by the novelist through the portrayal of the youthful journalist, Kumar who sets out to expose the exploitation of the poor who live in squalid conditions in a slum owned by a billionaire, Seth Daleria in whose industrial empire the sun never sets. For each hutment the Seth's men charge twenty five rupees a month in addition to the five hundred which every intending hut dweller has to pay in advance. The Seth had killed his cashier who threatened to reveal the inner secret of his wealth. In his eagerness to expose this exploitation and tear off the veil of hypocrisy from the hideous face of the capitalistic system, Kumar plans to publish a series of articles in his paper. The first article appears. The next morning he gets an invitation from the Seth to meet him at his office. Some portions of their conversation are reproduced to provide a fuller idea of the tactics such industrial magnates adopt to lure and silence their opponents.

"And may I ask why should you be so anxious to talk to an ordinary journalist like me?" Kumar asked.

"...you are not an ordinary journalist, Amar Kumarjee. There is great power in your pen. What you write is read by every one with great interest. And I am one of them."

"You read my articles with interest?"

"Why not? There is much truth in what you write."

This was too much for Amar to swallow. Now it was his turn to be sarcastic: "I have written that you squeeze exorbitant rent from poor tenants for miserable hovels built round a poisonous swamp. I have written that workers in your mills are so grossly under paid. I have written that you or the members of your family practically own or control thirty two companies and each of the companies declares a deficit every year, and yet your own safes and lockers are bulging with black money."

"I agree with you when you say those miserable hovels are unfit for human inhabitation. That's why I propose now to demolish them and to build in their place, apartment houses. I can sell each flat for a lakh of rupees."

"What exactly do you want to say?"

"Only this. . . . that poor wages are being paid not only to the mill workers, but also to brilliant journalists like you. . . . A paltry five hundred rupees a month to the writer of those wonderful articles! Out of that, fifty rupees are deducted for Income Tax and Provident Fund. Two hundred and fifty you pay for a small one-room flat and that has not been paid for four months. For three months the milk man has not been paid, while the grocers' bills have mounted to three hundred and forty rupees."

"... How do you know all this? Along with your other rackets, do you carry on espionage too?"

The man of money again referred to the slip of paper. "Brilliant academic career. First class B A, preferred journalism to government service because of your independent, almost revolutionary views. That is why the owner of your paper is taking advantage of you. After seven years he is giving you only five hundred. But on such a pittance, what happiness can you give to your wife? That is why she has left you. . . ."

"This is a lie. She has gone only for a few days to live with her father."

... "Three months are not a few days . . . one can't run a house on love and free air. There is something else one needs."

"What else does one need?" challenged Amar.

"One needs this" . . . and the Seth took a handful of coins and flung them on the table with dramatic flourish.

... "And do you think that you can buy me up with all this?" ...

... "Who is talking of buying and selling? I have already appointed you as my Public Relations Officer on two thousand and five hundred rupees a month, Income Tax free. Free house. Free car." The Seth obviously felt his offer was irresistible ... "So everything settled?"

"No, Daleriaji, nothing is settled. There is a power that is greater than all your money."<sup>18</sup> And, he proves it.

The number of writers who are sensitive to the suffering of the poor

is not many. Of the two hundred and odd Indo-Anglian novels published so far hardly a dozen depict it. And most of these novels appeared in the pre-independence period. Nobody knows why the revolutionary fervour and left-wing sympathies found in many gifted writers are lacking in their post-independence writings. There is a phenomenal growth of fiction packed with suspense, sex, sentimentality, crime, violence etc, thanks to the inspiration our writers are getting from abroad. The book stalls and pavements in every Indian city are full of imported books or books by Indians based on the western pattern, while many talented and gifted writers live in blissful obscurity. Anand, R K Narayan, Raja Rao, Bhattacharya, Malgõnkar, Markandaya, Jabvala, Kushwant Singh have international renown as excellent story tellers. But are they better understood and known in the country of their birth? Speaking in this connection Bhattacharya has observed,

It is good to be known abroad. Even so, I must confess that I would like to be known to my countrymen too. So far I have been better known in the U S A and Europe than in my own country.

All these writers have exhibited great promise, strength and artistic achievement but even then they are not great or 'major' writers according to the critical assessment made by Indian scholars. Sound critical studies have been rare and the few that we have, have been dogged by personal prejudices and a limited vision. Even a novelist like Anand, one of the most prolific writers of India and whose career as a writer spreads over almost four decades did not receive proper recognition until recently. Objective and responsible reviews of his works are rare. As he has complained several times his works have been greeted as "communist propaganda", and even some of the leading literary magazines (limbs of monopoly houses) dismissed his novels with passing references or with a paragraph or two. Prof C D Narasimhaiha has squarely condemned such acts of apathy and indifference shown to writers. He observes,

Mulk Raj Anand has had long standing as a writer of fiction but he has not had his share of praise from the serious literary critic. He has been dubbed a social propagandist without being read and unfortunately the titles of his novels have had a good deal to do with the prevalent prejudices. It is good to remember that all art is, in a sense, propaganda, and it is the treatment that should decide the social concerns and artistic preoccupation seem to take hold of Anand by turns and where the two fuse as say, in *Untouchable*, the novel is safe and its course is one of absorbing human interest.<sup>19</sup>

It is a common-place observation that literary criticism as it exists in India today is merely imitative and hardly helpful to the growth of literature. Very often, the academic critic approaches works of art with preconceived notions and borrowed yardsticks. This invariably influences the reader also. For instance the conversation between two young men who were going through the books on a display stand is reproduced below,

"Have you read this book?"

"Who is the author?"

"It is....."

"Oh, no, He writes about only...aspects which I don't like".

"No, this is a good novel, I have read it."

"Is it? I haven't read any of his novels, I don't like him. I heard once Prof.....mention that this novelist is not worth reading."

I remembered what a celebrated novelist (again anonymous) had told me years ago while he was discussing some of the problems the Indo-Anglian novelists had to face. He had said,

Yes, yes, we have critics and critics, very learned critics but my only complaint is that many of them don't read the books with sympathy, understanding and instead of assessing them on their intrinsic merits, they identify the books with this trend or that trend and would pass the judgement that they suffer in comparison with Kafka or Camus, or some other European writers. It appears as though we have to write to satisfy the critic not the reading public.

This view of the novelist may not be fully correct. But there is an impression that many critics are very rash in their pronouncement and some of the acrimonious discussions going on in the literary journals of our country (I have in mind the debate now going on between a critic and poet in Malayalam, each in turn telling the public that the other does not deserve to be recognised and so on) lends credence to their impression. This appears to be one of the major reasons why many of the writers who associated themselves with the progressive movement inspired by Marxism-Leninism in the thirties and forties, have moved away from their revolutionary fervour and stance, if not dissociated themselves with it. This is equally true of both the writers of regional literatures and Indo-Anglian literature and one cannot but agree with Dr Sreenivasa Iyengar who explains this shift of emphasis thus :

Although the progressive movement and Marxist influence had helped to give a social orientation to Indian literature (especially prose fiction), Marxism became more and more a cerebral exercise or a matter of mere intellectual acceptance. Not being first experienced in the rough and tumble of actual life, Marxist writing too tended to become a new kind of hot-house concoction. It has thus become possible in post-Independent India, in politics, in economics, in literature to swear by Marxism, socialism, and egalitarianism, yet perpetrate in actual life all the odd obliquities and iniquities. Only when creative fiction is based upon the writers' own social experience is it likely to be touched with life; only then will it be beyond pose and propaganda and become literature. Technology, Capitalism, and Commercialism are without question among the causes of the writers' sense of alienation from the people and their every day life.<sup>20</sup>

N RADHAKRISHNAN

- <sup>1</sup> TS Eliot, *Frontiers of Criticism*, 1956.
- <sup>2</sup> Walter Allen, *Reading a Novel*, p 22.
- <sup>3</sup> Stanley Romaine Hopper (ed), *Spiritual Problems in Contemporary Literature*, New York Harper and Bros, 1957, p 17.
- <sup>4</sup> MK Naik, *Mulk Raj Anand*, Arnold-Heinemann, India, New Delhi, 1973, pp 153-154.
- <sup>5</sup> Mulk Raj Anand, *Coolie*, Hind Pocket Books, Delhi 1972, p 11.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid* p 183.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid* p 265-266.
- <sup>8</sup> Saros Cowasjee in the Afterword which he added in 1969 to the Hind Pocket edition of Anand's *Untouchable*.
- <sup>9</sup> Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable*, Hind Pocket Books, Delhi, 1970, p 51.
- <sup>10</sup> A V Krishna Rao, *The Indo-Anglian Novel and the Changing Traditions*, Rao and Raghavan, Mysore, 1972, p 34.
- <sup>11</sup> Raja Rao, *Kanthapura*, Oxford University Press, 1963, p 244.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid* p 245.
- <sup>13</sup> Manohar Malgonkar, *Combat of Shadows*, Hind Pocket Books, New Delhi 1968, p 113.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid* p 124.
- <sup>15</sup> Shankar Ram, *Love of Dust*, p 127.
- <sup>16</sup> Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, *Two Measures of Rice*, (translated by MA Shakoor) Bombay, Jaico Publishing House, 1967.
- <sup>17</sup> Kamala Markandaya, *Nectar in a Sieve*, Jaico Publishing House, Bombay, 1956.
- <sup>18</sup> KA Abbas, *When the Night Falls*, Hind Pocket Books, Delhi, 1968 pp 21-25.
- <sup>19</sup> CD Narasimhaiah, *Banasthalipatrika*, January 1969, p 57.
- <sup>20</sup> Dr Srinivas Iyengar, *Indian Literature since Independence*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi 1973.

## *Sociological Ideas of Ivan Illich*

IN the recent years the *raison-d'être* of industrial growth has come to be increasingly questioned. Broadly this criticism runs along two lines. First, technology has created a vicious circle of demand and growth.<sup>1</sup> Second, technology has reached a stage where a product is not only alienated from the worker but, more importantly, from its many more consumers as well. A technology cannot get grafted to a culture unless it were the appropriate technology for that culture. Technology must obviously grow into a form that permits man to use his tools as a natural extension of his faculties; in other words to let him live in harmony with machines and not be tyrannised by them. This is essentially the same idea as put forward by Marx earlier.

The Mexican sociologist, Ivan Illich<sup>2</sup> is one of the leaders of the movement for a critical assessment of various aspects of the relationship between man and his tools. Illich in his study uses a very broad definition of tools, in which he not only includes various artifacts and machines but also productive institutions such as factories that make tangible commodities such as cars or electric current, and productive systems for intangible commodities such as those which turn out "education", "health", "knowledge", or "decisions." In this article we briefly examine Illich's theories in regard to their logical basis and their relevance to the Indian situation.

The overall design of Illich's inquiry has been described by him as a 'critical research on the monopoly of the industrial mode of production' and definition of 'conceptually alternative modes that would fit a post-industrial age.' The study is concerned essentially with the American situation, so this section must be examined with this limitation in view. However Illich claims to have abstracted some universal laws from this particular experience.

During the late sixties Illich examined a particular mode of production, namely the educational system, producing the commodity, education. The results, published as a book<sup>3</sup>, pointed out the following many shortcomings of the present schooling system: it conditions the students, its curriculum is obligatory, it is oriented toward credentials, it groups

students by age and their achievements, and finally that it is a hierarchical structure with the student at the bottom and the principal at the top. Similar criticism has been voiced, amongst others, by educationists John Holt and Paul Goodman.

Illich maintains that the educational system is a paradigm of other industrial modes of production. Therefore these modes suffer from similar shortcomings. This is particularly so for those modes that ostensibly set out to provide a public service. Examples are the transportation system where on certain highways driving below a certain speed is an offence; the medical profession, where it is compulsory to have a degree from a medical school to practice even though in certain situations such formalized training may not be necessary, etc. According to him :

To formulate a theory about a future society both very modern and not dominated by industry, it will be necessary to recognize certain common illusions. We must recognize that only within limits can machines take the place of slaves; beyond these limits they lead to a new kind of serfdom. Only within limits can education fit people into a man-made environment: beyond these limits lies the universal schoolhouse, hospital ward or prison. <sup>4</sup>

This brings Illich to one of his most fascinating concepts, namely that of watersheds of production. To illustrate his point Illich considers the history of modern medicine, which he claims is marked by two watersheds, one the year 1913 and the other around 1950. About the year 1913 it became more than 50 percent probable that a graduate of a medical school would be able to treat his patient, if he was suffering from one of the documented diseases of the time. The method of the scientific inquiry, namely classification and determination of casual relationships was applied increasingly to study diseases and this knowledge made medical science more effective. However, the greatest contribution toward the lengthened life span of man was perhaps by improved sanitation, hygiene, better food, inoculation against common diseases, etc. Yet medical care has, after the 1950's, become a tool to further the economic interests of a profession, namely the doctors. This profession will not admit people into it unless they have degrees from medical schools. At the same time doctors in America (through their association, the AMA) regulate the admissions to medical schools. Doctors seem to have become fewer and fewer and proper medical care seems to be available to the rich only.

Another example is the automobile. It seems to have crossed the second watershed, because according to Illich, the harm done by it to the environment far exceeds the good done by it. In fact, Illich estimates that the average speed of a car in America, after including the time spent on maintaining it, is about 6 miles per hour. This incidentally is the speed of the bicycle, which is the most efficient machine in respect of its energy consumption per unit of weight carried over a unit of distance. Consider this in view of the fact that the US spends 23 percent of its gross

expenditure on transportation in various forms.

This leads to the question: How does one determine the safe limits (watersheds) of production? To answer this Illich visualizes a society called the *convivial* society, where each member is guaranteed "the most ample and free access to the tools of the community." This should be considered with Illich's very broad definition of tools Elsewhere :

A convivial society should be designed to allow all its members the most autonomous action by means of tools least controlled by others. People feel joy as opposed to mere pleasure, to the extent their labour is creative; while the growth of tools beyond a certain point increases regimentation, dependence, exploitation and impotence.<sup>7</sup>

In the past some groups did have convivial life styles but these were based on 'the servitude of others.' The rationale of inventing machines in the first industrial revolution has been to provide an alternative to human slave labour. Tools were essentially designed to be used and not to be worked with. This of course does not apply to tools that enhance man's faculties or those that are available to all, at least in potential. Examples of the latter are the mail system, the legal system, and the telephone.

Illich points out that institutions, as they move toward their second watershed, become highly manipulative. Thus 'it costs more to make teaching possible than to teach.' An example of this from the Indian context is the fact that the number of supporting staff at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi is five times the number of the academic staff. This should be considered in view of the innumerable complaints that the IITs are producing graduates that are of no use to Indian society and technology. The same is true of most other Indian universities as well as other industrial organizations. To emphasize the importance of the structure of an organization rather than its ownership, Illich says:

Equally distracting is the suggestion that the present frustration is primarily due to the private ownership of the means of production, and that the public ownership of these same factories under the tutelage of a planning board could protect the interest of the majority and lead society to an equally shared abundance. As long as Ford Motor Company can be condemned simply because it makes Ford rich, the illusion is bolstered that the same factory could make the public rich. As long as people believe that the public can profit from cars, they will not condemn Ford for making cars. This issue at hand is not the juridical ownership of tools, but rather the discovery of the characteristics of some tools which make it impossible for anybody to 'own' them. The concept of ownership cannot be applied to a tool that cannot be controlled. The issue at hand therefore is what tools can be controlled in the public interest. Only secondarily does the question arise whether private control of a potentially useful tool is in the public interest.<sup>8</sup>

Illich now identifies the areas in which existence is threatened by

uncontrolled industrial development causing production to cross the second watershed. These are :

- (i) Ecological damage, thus, upsetting the delicate balance between man and nature,
- (ii) 'Radical monopoly' of products which is the monopoly of a type of product rather than a brand, thus denying convivial existence to man. Examples of radical monopolies are the education-mill, the car in the transportation system, etc.,
- (iii) Overprogramming or too much of unnecessary specialization to preserve the myth that each job requires very special abilities,
- (iv) Runaway industrialization leading to more centralization of authority supposedly to exercise controls but in practice concentrating power in the hands of fewer and fewer people,
- (v) Enforced obsolescence. Through advertisements and the like a company may force individuals to replace their perfectly working older gadgets for new ones.

To counter these dangers Illich suggests what he aptly calls 'counterfoil research'. This, he says, has two tasks :

to provide guidelines for detecting the incipient stages of murderous logic in a tool; and to devise tools and tool systems that optimize the balance of life, and thereby maximize liberty for all.<sup>9</sup>

Further science, which has come to be accepted as a cure-all must be demythologized. People must appreciate its actual rôle as well as its limitations. At the same time, the legal system, which potentially is a convivial tool, must be given freedom to play its real rôle. Also the myth that democracies with governments voted by a majority of votes reflect the aspirations of people needs to be exploded. Institutions based on myths can quite suddenly lose their respectability, their legitimacy and their reputation for serving the public good. It happened to the Roman Church in the Reformation, to Royalty in the Revolution. The unthinkable became obvious overnight: the people could and would behead their rulers.<sup>10</sup>

Let us examine the logical basis of Illich's frame-work. Any study of society based on the scientific method is bound to leave certain questions unanswered. This is not because it is not possible to gather data on these questions, but because they lie in the twilight zone of logic where either assertion or negation is meaningless. Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem shows that a logical system of sufficient complexity must contain certain unresolvable paradoxes.<sup>11</sup> In other words for any structure comprised of postulates and with definite rules of operation there will exist statements that can neither be proved nor disproved. Real world being infinitely more complex than any mathematical system, it follows that such paradoxes would be much more common in social and economic systems. In fact many controversial issues in these fields, when explored

deeply, turn out to be variants of the classical egg-and-hen debate.

Even while keeping in view the limitations of scientific analysis there are various shortcomings one can point out in Illich's interpretation of contemporary society. He questions the very rationale of cost-benefit analysis which is often employed by protagonists of unlimited industrial growth to justify their approach. At the same time he makes use of the same cost-benefit analysis to measure the utility or the disutility of a tool. Thus he concludes that cars are bad because on the average they do not carry one faster than 6 miles per hour while polluting the atmosphere etc. Cost-benefit analysis forms the corner-stone of systems engineering or a scientific analysis and synthesis of evolutionary systems. Carried to its logical conclusion this mechanistic viewpoint leads us to Skinner's world<sup>12</sup>, which Illich claims to abhor.

Protagonists of technological growth maintain that it enhances the quality of life and permits a more efficient use of resources on spaceship Earth. It extends man's faculties: hearing and speaking through the telephone, movement through the automobile, vision through the Television etc., giving him time to reflect on issues other than those of bread and butter. Illich on this first points out the distinction between science and technology.<sup>13</sup> Science is fine since it explains (classifies) natural phenomena. As for technology that leads to good and bad tools. Telephone and picturephone if made available to all are convivial tools, while the automobile is not. But one fails to understand how in a world with only the bicycle as the transport, telephones and picturephones would have any use. Also it is no use denying the fact that automobiles are useful in a variety of situations: bringing relief to the victims of a natural calamity, public transportation etc. Once one grants a few automobiles, where does one draw the line since individuals can almost always justify their need for these. Talking in the same vein of the formal schooling system that Illich does not fancy, one can point out that India had had a long tradition of informal education. Where did that lead: to handing down of crassest prejudices from one generation to another, ignorance, ritual, superstition, fatalism. The formal education system surely has faults, but on the whole it seems to work fairly well.

Society is a homeostat. Therefore even if present day technology eats up earth's resources too fast or pollutes the environment one can expect it to transform so as to adjust with altered conditions. Of course this argument does not indicate if such an unchecked course would not lead to violent upheavals, natural or man-made. A cybernetician with his machine in view might assert that dynamic stability is more desirable than unrestrained oscillations. That is perfectly valid under his set of assumptions. To extrapolate this to society is extremely hazardous because no performance function acceptable to all can be laid down for it. To borrow another concept from cybernetics, Illich and his supporters do perform a vital function, since they represent the reaction of the societal

system trying to modify itself as well as the environment so as to continue existence in a stable state.

If we look at an underdeveloped country like India it becomes clear that a lot of Illich's analysis is invalid: it does not in any case apply to pre-industrial societies. The pollution in India, paradoxically, far exceeds the pollution in the United States: most people drink contaminated water, living quarters are unhygienic, sanitation is a scandal. Admitted that this pollution is mostly organic as contrasted with chemical pollution in the U S, but it is perhaps more dangerous because people tend to ignore it. The tyranny of man as obtained almost anywhere in India is much more diabolical than the tyranny of machines in the U S. In spite of all the glamorization of poverty one cannot help agreeing with Oscar Lewis that "poverty of culture is one of the crucial traits of the culture of poverty".<sup>14</sup>

Finally the question: Who will exercise control in Illich's utopia? Will it require creation of a new class, a new bureaucracy? If it does, who will ensure that this class does not exceed its fiat. Groups without a strong external discipline have a propensity to form hierarchical sub-groups. Anarchy is the best government is a meaningless statement. Illich's framework is inherently an oversimplification. A dialectical synthesis of his viewpoint and the current philosophy behind growth would form a realistic and workable approach. The character of technology at a point in time reflects the spirit of that age. In the past technology has worked towards the creation of a slave, an automaton—an Alladin's djinn—who would do all unpleasant chores for men. Now, with the universal acceptance of the concept of equality one would expect a greater effort towards the design of convivial tools.

By way of conclusion, it must be emphasized that this has been a very fragmentary study of Illich's theories on society and technology, which hardly touches on the epistemological and technological questions involved. It should be reiterated that Illich has at many places, with great insight, presented the true significance of technological growth. In this article, certain flaws in Illich's framework have been pointed out, consideration of which permits one to view the relation between man and his tools in a better perspective. The major weakness of Illich's analysis is that he has attempted a linear extrapolation of trends in America. Societal dynamics are highly non-linear, however, as is borne out by the simplistic results obtained by systems engineers using computer models of growth.<sup>15</sup>

SUBHASH KAK

<sup>1</sup> J K Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston 1958.

<sup>2</sup> Ivan Illich, *Retooling Society*, CIDOC Mexico 1972 (Mimeographed manuscript to have been published as a book of the same name by Harper and Row 1973.)

<sup>3</sup> Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* Harper and Row.

<sup>4</sup> Ivan Illich, *Retooling Society*, op cit, p-9.

<sup>5</sup> S S Wilson, "Bicycle Technology", *Scientific American*, Vol 228, March 1973, pp 81-91.

<sup>6</sup> Ivan Illich, *Retooling Society*, op.cit., pp 2-4.

- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, pp 2-15.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, pp 2-23.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, pp 3-48.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, pp 5-6.
- <sup>11</sup> See for example *Philosophy of Science*, The Delaware Seminar, Interscience Publishers 1963.
- <sup>12</sup> B F Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, A Knopf 1971.
- <sup>13</sup> Not directly, however this distinction is implicit in his analysis.
- <sup>14</sup> Oscar Lewis, "The Culture of Poverty", *Scientific American*, Vol 215, October 1966, pp 19-25.
- <sup>15</sup> D H Meadows, D L Meadows, J Randers and William W Behrens, III, *The Limits to Growth*, Universe Books 1972.

## *Work-Experience and Indian Education*

THE reconstruction of Indian educational system and the attempt to make it productive and meaningful are really not new-felt needs, though much talked about these days after the submission of the report of the Indian Education Commission which has recommended work-experience as an integral part of education at all levels. Basic Education was designed to achieve the objectives but it did not work out successfully. Now again, although in a different form, a similar line of action has been proposed by Professor M N Agrawal and Acharya Vinoba Bhave, the organisers of the All India Educational Conference at Sewagram, Wardha. The organisers of the conference are pressing hard for the reintroduction of Basic Education in the form of work-experience in a society which has rejected even the Gandhian socio-economic model. This move raises certain fundamental issues which must be settled before any type of work-experience is introduced into the programmes of education. This paper attempts to discuss them in their proper perspective.

Work-experience may be introduced with two motives. It may be either an educative experience or training for proficiency in a trade or productive technique. If it is introduced for the purpose of providing educational experience, attempts should be made to guard against vocationalisation and narrow specialisation at a stage when vocational abilities and aptitudes are neither fully developed nor properly demarcated. Whatever work-experience is provided to children should be rich in its educational values. Its objective should be the education of a full-fledged citizen of a socialist democracy developing a sense of dignity of labour, spirit of cooperation and outlook of optimism which are indispensable qualities for the members of a socialist society.

On the other hand, if work-experience is introduced for economic considerations, the socio-economic realities of the country should be kept in mind. Ours is a nation with surplus manpower where many skilled and trained workers remain out of employment and are likely to remain so even in the near future if the present defective planning continues. Goods produced in the educational institutions would replace some of the agrofacts and artefacts from farms and factories. The result would

be redundancy for a good number of trained and experienced workers leading to further unemployment. This type of work-experience has a place in economics short of manpower resources but seems quite unsuitable for a country like ours. There is also the risk of amateur school children wasting a huge quantity of raw materials which are already scarce in the country. These products are likely to be inferior in quality. The purchaser is hardly likely to get his money's worth. Therefore such an experiment would prove futile under the present circumstances.

The nation should learn from the failure of Basic Education which tried to combine the aforesaid two objectives together. The craft was introduced not only as the medium of instruction but also for making schools self-sufficient if not fully then partially, by the sale of goods made by students. But the handicrafts selected for this purpose were economically obsolete and socially irrelevant. As there is no tendency now to go back to the craft-producing society, the work-experience which a man gets in Basic Schools makes him economically misfit and backward-looking. He remains isolated and alienated from the mainstream of economic life. His vocational education and work-experience serve no useful purpose.

The superstructure of Basic Education was built on the ideal of economic self-sufficiency. This ideal, it is now felt, has become unrealistic. If it is still held, the apprehension is that it may lead to a further deterioration of our already low standard of living and develop a negative attitude towards life and its problems. In the long run it would weaken the bonds of our national solidarity as economic interdependence and prosperity are the major factors of social cohesion. A marriage between the philosophies of asceticism and socialistic affluence is not desirable even for the sake of convenience. Then why not have a realistic approach? Whatever work-experience is proposed to be given to students should be conducive to our goals of socialism, industrialization and modernization.

Man's social existence is governed by the forces of production in the society. The tools and equipment which he uses for the productive purposes determine his values, beliefs and attitudes. India is on the road to modernization. A community which wants to modernise itself should modernise its tools and techniques of production. A society using primitive means of production remains primitive in its outlook and mental habits. The means of production and the techniques which have been recommended by the Basic Education scheme were primitive, out-dated and outmoded. Attempts for their reemployment would reverse the process of socialistic modernization and confine the country to the level of self-subsistent economy based on the Gandhian concept of the "desireless man".

In place of primitive tools of production modern scientific equipment should be used in schools for providing work-experience even though our motive is economic. Living in an age of technology, the students of today should be acquainted with its techniques. It will add more meaning

to their skill and bring harmony between the educational and productive systems. It will increase the vocational worth of students and supply of trained manpower. The net result of the application of science and technology would be a change in the attitude and perspective of our students towards the problems of life, preparing them to be more useful citizens. On the other hand, the tools recommended by the Wardha Scheme have little relevance to our economic realities. They are only of historical value. Although they can serve the need of a society which lives in the medieval age and idealizes poverty, they would hardly prove to be effective in the age of technology and socialism.

The application of science to industry and agriculture has transformed the economy of scarcity to the economy of plenty. The new economic order requires trained men to handle complex and sensitive machines. The worker of today must possess specialised technical knowledge; otherwise he would be unable to operate the equipment. The working principle of a technological society is efficiency and its gift is goods and services in abundance. Education of the workers of such a society should be richer in content. Science and technology should form its integral part.

However, the courses should be reorganised in such a way that they do not become an additional burden on our students, especially in secondary schools where the curriculum is already overloaded. The method of teaching also needs to be realistic and meaningful. It should be practical, work-oriented and directly related to the vocational and professional demands of the community. The teaching of science has to extend beyond its present narrow boundaries. Its objective should not merely be confined to the transmission of knowledge of scientific theories. There should be a continuous effort to develop scientific habits of mind and attitudes so that the students are able to establish a correct relationship between science and society. Its teaching should inculcate among students the new set of values which are required by the effective functioning of the new social order. If our education succeeds in this respect, it is bound to develop open mindedness, tolerance, impartiality, honesty and a sense of justice. It will train students to form opinion on evidence and eradicate superstition, bigotry, and prejudices which have pervasively taken deep roots in our national culture.

The social and the productive systems are inter-related and the mode of production determines the social relations. If the two are changing at different speeds, the result is a cultural lag, imbalance between the social skills and technical skills and also the disintegration of forms and functions of social institutions and structures. The consequences of all this are disastrous. Ours is still a closed and feudal society, organised on the basis of caste, creed and religion. But a socialist and industrial economy cannot work within this social frame. It is possible for a society based on craft production to maintain a closed class system and caste structure. But these institutions will have to go if new social arrange-

ments are to succeed in the country. It is, therefore, essential that our emphasis should not merely remain confined to vocational training. The real objectives must be to free students from bourgeois prejudices and the loyalties of caste, creed and religion; otherwise these institutions tend to turn the wheel of social progress in the opposite direction.

India's problem is one of finding out ways and means to bring about a change in an atavistic, rural, agricultural and religious society. The aim is to build a secular, socialist, modern and egalitarian society. This goal can never be achieved merely by increasing human and material resources. As long as we hold on to the theory and ideals of wantlessness, asceticism and "*Daridranarain*," and people continue to accept their miseries as the natural outcome of misdeeds in their previous births and *karmas*, the destiny of the nation is not going to alter. The stagnant Hindu mentality fortified by the theories of popular religious beliefs is a cultural constraint on India's economic growth and socialistic modernization. Work-experience should, therefore, be provided to students in such a way as to transform their outmoded beliefs and values which are psychologically hindering the speedy development of our national economy.

There is no dearth of men in the country who believe in reducing all work-experience only to manual labour. They expect students to assist farmers in the fields in sowing and harvesting crops. They want them to build roads, dig wells and clean cities. They are useful experiences but work-experience cannot be synonymous with mere physical work. The careless employment of students in such projects is sometimes a wastage of human and material resources. Students, in addition to these, can acquire useful work-experience in several other ways: they can help in eradicating illiteracy; work in hospitals as attendants and ward boys; learn first aid and nursing techniques; fire fighting and civil defence devices; traffic control; secretarial practices, stenography and salesmanship; they can be used in publicity campaigns for the propagation of new ideas essential for social reconstruction; their services can be enlisted for the management of agricultural and industrial museums, libraries and reading-rooms in villages and towns. These assignments are also valuable work-experiences which no educational system should try to ignore. If these experiences are gained by students, it is possible to inculcate among them a sense of social service and spirit of dedication for the public cause. Its ultimate result would be a better moral and social discipline which our citizens lack conspicuously.

India is committed to establish a secular and socialist democracy. The main objective behind work-experience should be the preparation of a citizen who is mentally, morally and vocationally equipped to take his place in such a society rather than the training of a narrow specialist who knows nothing except his own occupation. The members of a socialist democratic society need a wider perspective, a new vision, a new sense of commitment towards their ideals that sets them apart from any other type of society. They should be men of conviction as well as of action. Secula-

rism, socialism and democracy are not certain doctrines to be preached and propagated from platforms only to the general public. On the contrary these are philosophies to be really practised in day-to-day lives of the individuals. Unless this is so, holding elections, enacting the so-called egalitarian legislations, nationalizing banks, starting public enterprises and giving slogans of 'quit poverty' cut no ice. What is required on the part of the leadership and masses is a sense of dedication and sacrifice for this noble cause. If work-experience succeeds in inculcating these virtues, the purpose of education, in its true sense, shall be achieved; otherwise it would be merely a repetition of the programmes of Basic Education which received its due burial at the time of its birth.

SURYA NATH SINGH

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Review Article*

### *The World of Social Bandits*

E J Hobsbawm, *BANDITS*, Penguin Books, pp 156, Price 40 p.

THE famous British conservative historian A J P Taylor said, "Things happen because they happen." For historians like him history is but a jumble of facts, without a coherent meaning or any connecting link. Discussing such 'Tory' empiricists whose negative approaches took away all purpose from the study of history Professor Arthur Marwick wrote,

Marxism offered one possible means towards meaning in history. Actually the works produced by the handful of leading British Marxist historians are so subtle and penetrating in their historical analysis that it is hard to see that they differ greatly from the style of historical study fostered by the *Annales* school, or indeed from that of many other historians concerned with the *totality* of historical experience. However it would be churlish not to agree that a remarkable lead in the movement away from the main tenets of the Tory empiricists has been given by a group of English historians who are happy to style themselves Marxists.<sup>1</sup>

Such a generous recognition of the role of Marxists in reviving scientific historiography in Britain from non-Marxist quarters will not surprise any one acquainted with the works of Eric J Hobsbawm, Christopher Hill, A L Morton, E P Thompson and others. The paper back edition of Hobsbawm's *Bandits* affords a wider range of readers the opportunity to taste this new writing which has led to a revival of scientific historiography in Britain.

In this book Hobsbawm examines with penetrating insight and painstaking research the recurrent and ubiquitous phenomena of the social Bandits. Chronologically he goes back to the Middle Ages when the legendary and universally popular Robin Hood is supposed to have flourished. Geographically he spans the entire face of the Globe, with no continent left out. In these pages along with dozens of striking pictures and

sketches appear the pen portraits of a galaxy of 150 rogues from all over the world and their clans and gangs. Among them are colourful and depressing figures of immense variety, tragic and comic characters, heroes and villains Salvatore Giuliano of Italy, Lampiao of Brazil, Giorgos Volanis of Greece, Gajaraj of India, Billy the Kid of USA, Froilan Alama of Peru and Darcy Dugan of Australia. For a book of 156 pages including indices and appendix and illustrations Bandits is a remarkable feat of precision, brevity and sweep.

A look at the titles of chapters gives us a glimpse into the depth of treatment and the sweep of coverage:

- 1 What is Social Banditry ? 2 Who Becomes a Bandit ? 3 The Noble Robber 4 The Avengers 5 Haiduks 6 The Economics and Politics of Banditry 7 Bandits and Revolution 8 The Expropriators 9 The Bandit as a Symbol. And finally an Appendix: Women and Banditry.

Hobsbawm steers clear of both pitfalls—the undue adulation in the traditional popular ballads and down right condemnation from ethical standpoints. The merit of Hobsbawm's study is that inspite of the ideological conviction of the author, he does not attempt to fit in facts to preconceived theories. His conclusions and evaluations flow naturally and logically from the wealth of data he has marshalled from all over the world and a number of languages.

Hobsbawm's *Bandits*, which in a way is the continuation of his arguments and findings in his previous work *Primitive Rebels* is of immense help to students of Indian History. India had been a home of perennial banditry from the time of the Emperor Jalal-ud-din Khilji (AD 1290-96). Zia-ud-din Barani has recorded that Jalal-ud-din's administration captured about 1000 thugs during his reign. Although it is possible to trace the origins of the Indian bandits to several centuries past, it is now generally admitted that the phenomenon of banditry took on an entirely new character and dimension. British historians and administrators of whom Lord Hastings is credited with exterminating the Pindaris and Lord Bentick who established a "Thagi and Dacoity Department" in 1835 with the famous W H Sleeman as its head would have us believe that banditry was an endemic feature of Indian society and religion from time immemorial. Sleeman claimed that he and his men by finally exterminating the thugs had done away with "an enormous evil which had for centuries oppressed people and from which it was long supposed that no human efforts could relieve them."<sup>2</sup>

Though we need not deny the British a certain measure of success in curbing certain classes of bandits in certain areas with their highly centralised bureaucracy and police system, the fact remains that banditry has never since disappeared from the Indian scene. Even the dawn of freedom in the late forties, the integration of the native states and feudal principalities in the fifties and Vinoba Bhave's appeasement campaigns of the

sixties have not succeeded in extinguishing this ancient Indian curse. Even well into the seventies the bandits flourish in the ravines and wastes of Central and Western India.

Bandits are not simply a law and order problem, neither are they a moral problem to be tackled by prophets and religious reformers. Unless we scientifically assess the Indian Banditry, its social roots and political ramifications, we can never succeed in tackling it.

Hiren Mukerjee on the eve of our freedom stated that,

When the history of India comes to be rewritten, as it must be, a different verdict, very probably, will be given on the Pindaris, for example, alleged to have been professional free booters.

Mukerjee very rightly questions the assumptions and claims of the British and seeks to throw a new light on those condemned as free booters and bandits.

But when Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan actually tried to rewrite history from the strictly Indian point of view, the Editors and contributors did not find themselves agreeing with Professor Mukerjee who saw in the widespread growth of banditry in the 19th century India influences of the anti-British stirrings. Volume IX of *The History and Culture of the Indian People* dealing with the 19th century devotes only two and a half pages to the Bandits and that too as a sub section of the chapter on British Administration. Then there are two or three isolated references in this vast volume of 1206 pages. Dr RC Mazumdar, the General Editor of the series has himself contributed the chapter. He says :

Thus the fight of the Pindaris and Wahabis against English cannot be regarded as a struggle for Independence, because to them English stood as a symbol, either of ruling authority or of heretic religion, and not merely of an alien rule. In other words, they did not take up arms with the conscious and definite object of freeing of India from the foreign rule. \*

With all his militant nationalism, Dr Mazumdar does not hesitate to declare :

The name of Sleeman occupies an honoured place in Indian history for the successful exertions he made for the expatriation of the Thugs and the well known work *Confessions of a Thug* by Meadows Taylor gives a lurid picture of the criminal bands.

Even contemporary observers of the banditry in post-independence India are baffled and confused. Dr S S Katare says :

It is a paradox that in spite of various and vigorous administrative measures to suppress and liquidate dacoity it has continued to flourish unabated.

Katara quotes Sleeman who compared the phenomena to "a ball of quick silver, which if pressed by the finger, divided into many small globules, all certain to come together again and cohere as firmly as before."<sup>6</sup>

Katara notes the failure of the police. He says:

The police kill the dacoits indiscriminately by adopting legal and illegal practices. They finish up the gangs after a great loss of property and lives. But their efforts fail miserably because new gangs spring up on the ashes of the older ones. <sup>7</sup>

Then there is the question of mixed public opinion on the issue. Notorious bandits like Man Singh of the Chambal Ravines were popular men of some standing in the locality :

Man Singh used to settle local disputes very peacefully. He never showed any sign of injustice to the poor and never favoured the rich. Thus he captivated the hearts of the people by his sense of truthfulness. He often helped the cause of the poor and therefore he could continue his depredations for two decades. <sup>8</sup>

We can often come across such contradictory and confusing assessments even in Police journals. All these are true, but only partially. For those who wade through the maze of this complex and even contradictory phenomena, Eric Hobsbawm provides a perspective and beacon. A few of his illuminating ideas and theses worked out from a wealth of data are quoted here.

**Social Bandits:** The point about social bandits is that they are peasant outlaws whom the lord and state regard as criminals, but who remain within peasant society, and are considered by their people as heroes, as champions, as avengers, fighters for justice, perhaps, even leaders of liberation, and in any case as men to be admired, helped and supported. <sup>9</sup>

All underworld crime is not what is designated social banditry. Social banditry has a certain affinity to Revolution, being a phenomenon of social protest in a society of inequity and oppression. But the popular tradition of bandit heroes handed down in ballads and songs and anecdotes do not conform to the idea of fullfledged revolutionaries especially those of the so-called Noble Robbers like Robin Hood or Man Singh. Hobsbawm explains :

Indeed they are not even social or any kind of revolutionaries though the true Robin Hood sympathises with revolutionary aspirations of 'his' people.....However his object is comparatively modest. He protests not against the fact that peasants are poor and oppressed. He seeks to establish or to re-establish justice or the 'old ways', that is to say, fair dealings in a society of oppression. He rights wrongs. He does not seek to establish a society of freedom and equality. <sup>10</sup>

But in times and places of revolutionary ferment and action, social banditry helps the process and more often than not individual bandits reform themselves to grow into revolutionary heroes. Mao has more than once noted this point. Hobsbawm quotes Mao:

These people fight most courageously. When led in a just manner they can become a revolutionary force. <sup>11</sup>

Such examples are plenty in the history of India, Italy, Eastern

Europe, Latin America etc. But an individual bandit outgrowing his moorings to a full-fledged revolutionary is one thing and the revolutionary potentiality of any group or clan of bandits is quite another. Discussing a number of examples from many continents Hobsbawm concludes:

Politically, bandits were, as we have seen, incapable of offering a real alternative to the peasants. Moreover their traditionally ambiguous position between the men of power and the poor, as men of the people but contemptuous of the weak and the passive, as a force which in normal times operated within the existing social and political structure or on its margins, rather than against it, limited their revolutionary potential. They might dream of a free society of brothers, but the most obvious prospect of a successful bandit revolutionary was to become like the gentry.<sup>1 2</sup>

Hobsbawm concludes:

Bandits belong to the peasantry. If the argument of this book is accepted, they cannot be understood except in the context of the sort of peasant society which, it is safe to guess, is as remote from most readers as ancient Egypt, and which is as surely doomed by history as the stone Age.<sup>1 3</sup>

Certainly, the peasant society which breeds bandits is as remote as ancient Egypt to Hobsbawm and most of his readers. But is it so to his readers in India? Doomed as it is like the Stone Age, we in India are still living in a society with large patches and sectors which breed bandits. Those who want to grapple with this complex problem, had better read Hobsbawm for perspective and policy. Arthur Marwick's praise is not off the mark.

P GOVINDA PILLAI

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Marwick, *The Nature of History*, Mac Millan p 205.

<sup>2</sup> W H Sleeman, Report on the *Depredation Committee by the Thugs* (1840).

<sup>3</sup> Hiren Mukerjee, *India's Struggle for Freedom*, Revised Edition 1962, p 40.

<sup>4</sup> The History and Culture of Indian People Vol. IX *British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance*, (General Editor) Dr. R C Mazumdar, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay p 619.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p 382.

<sup>6</sup> S S Katare, *Patterns of Dacoity in India*, New Delhi, 1972, p 127.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p 135.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p 136.

<sup>9</sup> Eric J Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, Penguin Books, 1972, p 17.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p 55.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p 106..

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p 107.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p 130.

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*Articles, communication, note and book review express the views of their authors and not necessarily of the editors or of the Indian School of Social Sciences.*

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## FROM THE EDITOR

*We regret the omission in Sudipto Mundle's article "State Character and Economic Policy" in Issue Number 22, May 1974. "I am greatly indebted to Amit Bhaduri, Arvind Das, Pranab Bardhan, Rabindra Ray and R S Rao for their suggestions and comments on an earlier draft. However, responsibility for errors in facts or argument is entirely mine".*

GORAN DJURFELDT

STAFFAN LINDBERG

## *Family Planning in a Village in Tamil Nadu*

### *The Ideology of Population Control*

AFTER a period of indifference or reserve, the Government of India launched a massive Family Planning Programme in 1960-61.<sup>1</sup> The Government's change of attitude towards the population problem seems to have been brought about partly through foreign, and mainly American, pressure.

The ideology of population control can be labelled neo-malthusian, since its basic tenet is that population tends to grow faster than the economic resources by which it subsists. Neo-malthusians have elaborated this ideology into a complete world-view capable of explaining both the genesis of underdevelopment and its persistence in spite of massive development efforts.

The ideology of population control is shared by the ruling classes in India and by those in the West. Two leading Tamil Nadu social scientists, K. K. Pillay and C. M. Abraham of the University of Madras quote Robert Mc Namara in their exposition of the population problems of India and of the world as a whole :

(The population problem is) by half a dozen criteria, the most delicate and difficult issue of our era—perhaps of any era in history. It is overlaid with emotion. It is controversial. It is subtle. Above

all, it is immeasurably complex. It is the tangled problem of excessive population growth. It is not merely a problem, it is a paradox. It is at one and the same time an issue that is intimately private—and yet inescapably public. It is an issue characterized by reticence and circumspection—and yet in desperate need of realism and candour. It is an issue intolerant of Government pressure—and yet endangered by government procrastination. It is an issue, finally, that is so hypersensitive—giving rise to such diverse opinion—that there is an understandable tendency simply to avoid argument, turn one's attention to less complicated matters, and hope that the problem will somehow disappear. What may disappear is the opportunity to find a solution that is rational and humane. If we wait too long that option will be overtaken by events. We cannot afford that. For if there is anything certain about the population explosion, it is that if it is not dealt with reasonably, it will in fact explode: explode in suffering, explode in violence, explode in inhumanity.<sup>2</sup>

In the hands of ideologists, like Pillay and Abraham, population growth can be made responsible for everything, for example, the failure of planning in India:

Since independence, India has been striving hard to improve the lot of the undernourished, underfed, under-clothed and under-sheltered masses and also to provide better employment opportunities, transportation and other amenities which are now considered basic to civilization. This is being done through a series of Five Year Plans. Striking advances have been made in economic and social fields. Agricultural production has doubled. We are on the threshold of a Green Revolution. There is an all-round development in educational, medical and industrial fields. The national income has risen by 90 per cent over a period of 18 years. But our gigantic efforts and impressive gains have not made any improvement in the conditions of the masses. The gains of development have been seriously eroded, however by the rising tide of population.<sup>3</sup>

Yes, population growth can even be made responsible for the growing disparities between rich and poor countries:

Most countries developed and developing are presently maintaining a 3 to 5 per cent increase in national income, which means that the people of the wealthier ones, with a population growth rate of 1 per cent or less, are becoming richer, whereas those of the poor countries with a population growth of 2 per cent or more, are becoming progressively poorer.<sup>4</sup>

By means of a similar argument population growth can be shown to underlie several of the most important symptoms of underdevelopment:

In a democracy every citizen must be provided with not only adequate food, but also shelter, clothing, education, employment, medical care and other amenities of life. It is not difficult to see how the

problem of providing these amenities increases in complexity as the size of the population increases.<sup>5</sup>

Having reduced the problem to mainly one factor, the ideologists arrive at their panacea: the growth of population must be halted!

### *Programme of Family Planning*

The Government of India intends to halt population growth by means of a reduced birth rate. Several methods are suited to this end:

- 1) an increase in the average age of marriage which in India is among the lowest in the world, 15 years for girls and 20 for boys;
- 2) encouragement of abortions;
- 3) spreading the use of contraceptive methods, both natural ones like coitus interruptus and abstinence, and technical ones, like condoms, coils, pills, etc.; and
- 4) sterilization.

Of these methods the Government has chosen to rely mainly upon sterilization. The main goal of the family planning policy has been to convince couples having more than two or three children to undergo voluntary sterilization. The operation is most commonly performed on men. Then it is called vasectomy; in connection with delivery women it is called tubectomy or salpingectomy. The latter is a more complicated operation.

The Government has put less emphasis on other methods of birth control. Contraceptive methods, like pills, pessaries, foam tablets and jellies are, according to the reasoning of the Government, too complicated for "simple village folks" to handle. Encouragement of abortions have been included in the programme only recently, and then against the opposition of orthodox Hindus who consider abortion a sin. Likewise, the Government has not made any serious efforts to raise the average age of marriage. According to law, a girl need only be 15 years in order to marry.

Clearly the main motive for launching the family planning programme is a "macro-motive": A reduced rate of population growth is considered by the Government and the ruling classes as a national interest. To undergo sterilization is, then, a patriotic act. But in the propaganda, micromotives are also stressed: The small family is a happy family, according to Government propaganda. In a pamphlet available at the Kelambakkam Primary Health Centre, the former President of India, Zakir Hussein, addresses his countrymen with the following words:

Brothers and Sisters!

Our population problem is a colossal and intensive one. In my capacity of President of the nation, and as a private individual I give high priority to this problem. . . .

Our family planning scheme will not be successful till the day our brothers and sisters come to realize the fact that having more than two or three children is not good, and act accordingly.

A variety of reasons for adopting family planning are given in the pamphlet: The children must be fed, dressed and educated, and when they grow up they must get a job, which is more difficult in a family with too many children. The small and happy family makes for a happy nation !

Another micro-motive stressed in the propaganda is the concern for the mother. Too many pregnancies at too short intervals are a threat to the health of the mother.

This paper studies family planning in a Tamil Nadu village.<sup>6</sup>

### *Some Basic Facts about Thaiyur Panchayat*

Thaiyur panchayat belongs to Chingleput District. It is situated some 25 miles south of Madras City near the coast and the Bay of Bengal. Thaiyur panchayat has about 5,000 inhabitants and about 1,000 households belonging to ten different hamlets. It has a peculiar caste composition, since nearly 90 per cent of the population are Harijans. They belong to the ex-untouchable caste of Paraiyan. The caste composition is a consequence of the "dual economy" which is found here: the panchayat lies near to the Kovelam Salt Factory in which a majority of the Harijans are employed for a part of the year. The economy is "dual" in the sense that it is dominated by agriculture during half the year and by salt production during the other half. This "duality" is, of course, as peculiar as the caste composition. As we will show, one can, despite all this, draw conclusions from the study of Thaiyur panchayat which can be useful also in a more general context.

Most people in Thaiyur are poor. In terms of cash about 50 per cent of the households earn less than 1,000 rupees a year. On the other hand 15 per cent earn more than 2,000 rupees. In other words, about 70 per cent of all households can spend less than one rupee per consumer and day. The three richest households in Thaiyur earn about 10 per cent of all incomes. Each of them earns about 50,000 rupees per year.

On the local level the Panchayat Union has the major responsibility of carrying out the family planning programme. The head of the Thiruporur Panchayat Union stressed "agricultural production and family planning as the most important programmes for the future". The Health Inspector is the official in charge of the latter programme. According to him, the Auxiliary Nurses-Midwives are instructed to propagate family planning in the maternity centres. They encourage the women to adopt the loop system. Up to November 1969, the system had been adopted by 96 women, while the target for the year was 200. Likewise, in Thiruporur 286 vasectomy operations had been performed during the same period. This was also below the target for the year which was 450 operations. A partial reason for the latter failure was the lack of vasectomy facilities within the Union; patients had to be taken to Tambaram, Madras or Chingleput.

According to Government instructions, propaganda should also be

promulgated at public meetings. The Extension Officer for Education is responsible for the arrangement of such meetings :

I am also the Extension Officer for public meeting about family planning. But it is very difficult to have public meetings here, because the villagers will disturb them. For example, we were conducting one meeting in one village. Then one fellow got up and started to discuss the price of rice prevailing here. 'Why can't you give one measure of rice for one rupee here, as you are doing in Madras?' If you do that, we may start to think about family planning.'

Now, how can we conduct meetings when conditions are like this? These Harijans are lazy !

So few public meetings are held nowadays. Instead the Union has adopted the policy of trying to motivate people through personal contact and face-to-face communication. One of the main duties of the *Grama Sevika* (female village level worker) and the *Mukhya Sevika* are to teach the women family planning methods. If a woman consents to try the loop, she is taken to the nearest dispensary. The *Gram Sevak* (male village level worker) also engages in family planning work, but only as one task among others. If successful such work can be remunerative. The person who can convince another person to undergo an operation, and who arranges for it to be made, is entitled to ten rupees. The patient himself will get thirty rupees.

The medical family planning facilities in the Union were improved in 1970 when a female doctor started to come once a week to Kelambakkam Primary Health Centre. She is especially assigned to family planning. After our field work was finished these facilities were further improved in 1971-72. The Primary Health Centre was rebuilt, and moved into five new houses opposite to the cinema on the northern outskirts of Kelambakkam.

The Swallows of course take a special interest in family planning. But only during a short period has this been manifested in family planning propaganda. In 1968 a Scandinavian volunteer and midwife joined the project. Her special task was to carry out family planning work. Her first attempt at propaganda was at a public meeting in Komancheri. Those who gathered around the Landrover to listen to the "*vellaiaamma*" (white woman) proved to be so decidedly negative to family planning that the meeting had to be abruptly ended almost before it had started.

The most important propaganda work is carried out by the Government. Big advertisements are seen here and there along the roads propagating the "small-family norm". Family planning slogans are painted on the walls of the new Primary Health Centre. Notices are put up outside the dispensaries, the clinics and other public buildings. And, perhaps most important, colour slides and documentaries are shown in the cinema theatres. A frequent theme in the main films themselves is family problems, where the middle-class small-family norm is propagated. Since going to

the cinema is one of the favourite pastimes also in the countryside, the villagers can hardly avoid getting acquainted with family planning.

Despite massive efforts the family planning programme has been far from successful. In Thaiyur this failure can easily be explained by means of some infrastructural facts of demography and household economy.

### *Some Demographic and Economic facts*

We have estimated the rate of population growth in Thaiyur to be 1.8 per cent.<sup>9</sup> This is close to the all-India growth rate of 2 per cent as estimated by Myrdal<sup>9</sup> but below the 1971 census estimate of 2.5 per cent for the period 1961-71. So one could get the impression that the "population bomb" is ticking also in Thaiyur. Between 1961 and 1969 the population in the Panchayat increased from 4,088 to 4,814.

Laymen tend—especially if they are influenced by neo-malthusian ideology—to associate a high rate of population growth with (1) big families, and (2) high nativity. By witnessing only family planning propaganda, a naive observer easily gets the impression that Indian families are usually very big, and that Indian women are almost always pregnant. Such distorted understanding of the demographic structure of rural India is, in fact, quite common, especially among townspeople and among Westerners. If we want to understand why family planning has failed in Thaiyur, we must refute these distortions.

Let us first look at the size of households. The mean size of a Thaiyur household is 4.83. This figure is higher than the average for Tamil Nadu as a whole, which is 4.57. For rural India as a whole the average is slightly higher: 5.20 members per household.<sup>10</sup> This simple statistic indicates that the second hypothesis may also be wrong.

TABLE 1

NUMBER OF CHILDREN TO WIFE OF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD LIVING  
IN THE HOUSEHOLD

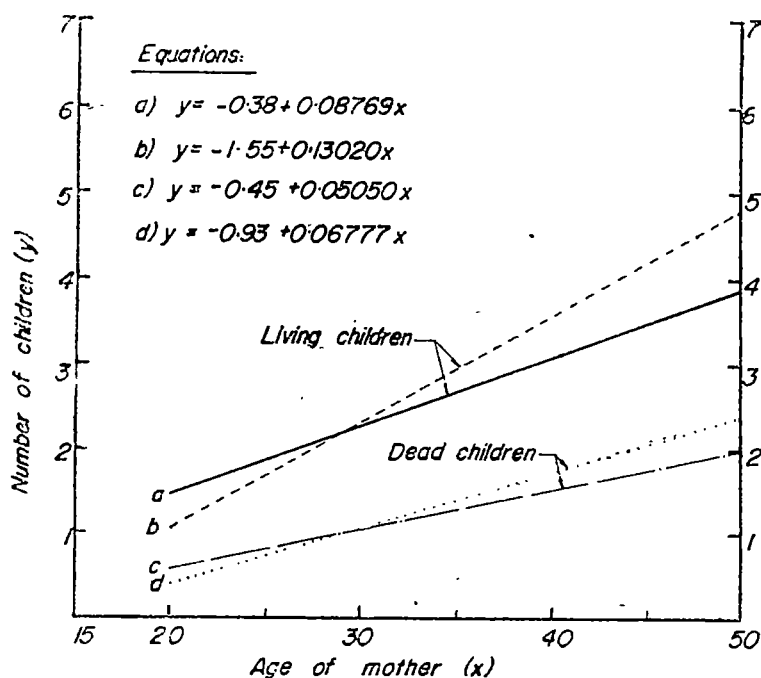
Number of children living in the household	Number of households	
	No.	Per cent
0	162	17.2
1	192	20.3
2	232	24.6
3	167	17.7
4	101	10.7
5	52	5.5
6	25	2.6
7	8	0.8
8	3	0.3
9 and above	3	0.3
	945	100.0

A look at Table 1, shows that the second "hypothesis" is proven totally wrong. Very few families "swarm" with children. In a majority of the households there are two children or less. Only about 20 per cent of the households have more than three children living with them.

In Figure 1 we have plotted the number of children as related to the age of the mother. As is clear from the figure, a Thaiyur woman is likely to have four or five children when she passes out of her reproductive age, that is, when she reaches 50. Furthermore, she is likely to have lost about two children. On an average, then, she has gone through six or seven pregnancies.

Four or five children is less than would be expected by a lay demographer.<sup>11</sup> Six or seven deliveries is far below the reproductive capacity of a woman. Six or seven deliveries between marriage and menopause

FIGURE I  
REGRESSION LINES FOR THE NUMBER OF LIVING AND DEAD CHILDREN  
AS A FUNCTION OF THE AGE OF THE MOTHER,  
(POPULATION: WIVES OF HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS.)



Note: The four lines all represent  $y$  (number) as a function of  $x$  (age). Two lines,  $a$  and  $c$ , build on census data taken at face value, while two lines,  $b$  and  $d$ , take account of the fact that our data are less reliable in the  $x$ -interval 40-49. Lines  $b$  and  $d$  have been calculated for the interval 15-39, and then extrapolated to 40-49. The true regression lines probably lie between the ones given by us.

entails a *space* of, on an average, five or six years between each pregnancy. We may conclude, then, that Thaiyur women practise *birth spacing* or some other method of "family planning." They try to avoid too frequent pregnancies and too many children. In other words, family planning is practised in Thaiyur, but mainly with traditional methods.

The most common method of birth spacing is prolonged lactation. In Thaiyur, especially among Harijans, infants are breast-fed as long as they themselves like it. Forced weaning occurs only when the mother is pregnant again. People know that such long period of lactation reduces the likelihood of a new pregnancy. Their belief was recently confirmed by A O Perez who found that prolonged lactation affects ovulation and menstruation after childbirth.<sup>12</sup>

Abortion is another way of preventing births. "Women often seek risky ways" to get abortions, according to one of our respondents. In Thaiyur a herbal abortifacient is available: The juice of the stem of the "Yeruhachedi" bush<sup>13</sup> is said to provoke abortion of the foetus.

The conclusion that one can make from the study of Thaiyur demography is that family size is less a result of blind sexual urges, as neo-malthusians tend to think, and more a result of planning and foresight. Similar conclusions have been drawn by Bondestam, Douglas, de Jonge and Vorkevisser, Konter, and Mandani.<sup>14</sup>

Thaiyur families are to a large extent "planned", albeit not exactly in the way intended by the Family Planning Programme. This is evident from the very marked differences in fertility between different agrarian classes, Table 2.

The figures in the table relate to total fertility, that is mortality has not been considered. The neo-malthusian view of fertility as an independent variable is here falsified. It is more correct to say that fertility is a

TABLE 2  
NUMBER OF BIRTHS PER WIFE (OF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD),  
AS RELATED TO AGRARIAN CLASS.

Agrarian class	Mean number of births per wife (of household head)
Big farmers (owning 20 acres or above)	5.15 (n = 41)
Middle farmers (owning 3 to 20 acres)	4.05 (n = 216)
Small farmers and landless labourers (owning less than 3 acres)	3.42 (n = 558)
Total for all households engaged in agriculture	3.67 (n = 815)

Note: Note that the figures are based on all wives in Thaiyur, many of whom still are in their reproductive age. Therefore the figures cannot be compared with those in Figure 1.

dependent variable (Douglas,<sup>15</sup> de Jonge and Vorkvisser,<sup>16</sup> and Sahlin<sup>17</sup>) One is also reminded of Marx's critique of Malthus, where he states that there is no absolute law of population. On the contrary, each mode of production has its own population law.<sup>18</sup>

It is wrong, then, to say that poverty goes together with high natality. It is not true for Thaiyur, and probably not for India as a whole. The Indian pattern is probably the same as that found in pre-revolutionary Russia and China, or in Middle Ages England,<sup>19</sup> where family size and natality increased with increasing wealth.

The strong correlation between class and fertility indicates that married couples take account of economic factors above all when they plan their families. The economic implications of having children differ according to the situation of the family. This becomes evident from even a cursory analysis of the place given to children in the economic structure.

The most important thing with children is the well-known fact that they take care of their parents when the latter grow old. To an old person faithful children are a question of life or death. The tragedy of losing one's only son is an illustration of this: When he was interviewing in Komanagar, one of our field workers saw an old woman who was lying on the road with torn clothes. He asked her:

Why are you lying here in the mud?

She answered:

I came a long distance because my son has gone away from our house. He is 18 years old, and he is my only son. So I am searching for him. I have searched for the past 15 days, but I cannot find him. I won't live in the world without my son.

Which is your native place?

My native place is Maduranthakam. I won't go to my house without my son. He is my only property.

When he heard this, he felt deeply moved. He advised her:

Please don't worry. He will come back to your house soon.

Then he took her into a house and asked them to give shelter for the night to the unfortunate old lady.

Another illustrative case is that of an old married couple in Komancheri. They are living alone in their house. They have a married daughter living in a nearby hamlet, but they have nobody to take care of them. The old man cannot go for work. The old lady is willing to work, but the land-owners do not allow her because they think she is too weak and hence they drive her away from their fields. So the old couple do not get any income. Sometimes their daughter brings food to them, but mostly they are starving. "I was very moved, when I met them," our interviewer writes, "I gave them one rupee which I happened to have in my pocket." The old man accepted the money in an excited mood, and immediately gave it to his wife. She went straight to their neighbour's house to buy wheat.

If an old person has no one to care for him when he grows old, he will starve to death. He cannot count on the community to help him, neither can he trust his neighbours. According to the norm, he cannot even expect help from his married daughter. Most often she lives in another village with her husband, and her parents have no right to demand any help from their son-in-law, while he, in turn, has full authority over his wife.

Or, in the words of a woman in Eri Ethir Vayil:

I have no son. If I give our only girl in marriage to someone, who will then protect us? What will happen when we grow old, when we have no son? We cannot go to our son-in-law's house. Even if we give him our land to protect us, he may sell it and run away leaving us in the street.

Other advantages also accrue from grown-up children. If a man has a joint family, for example, with his grown-up sons and their wives living with him,<sup>20</sup> it will entail definite economic advantages. He can, for example, build an irrigation well on his lands:

Once there is a well for us, there will be no suffering.

Couldn't you dig a well-yourself?

The Government must do it. If we had been able to do it ourselves, we would not have expected help.

But some people have managed on their own.

Yes, in big families they will be able to manage. When there are many male labourers in a family, it is possible.

Likewise, it was said about one family:

All able-bodied members work hard to earn their living. So even during last year's drought they were able to adjust without incurring any debts.

It is because of such advantages that big farmers want big families.<sup>21</sup> Once grown up, his children will make his farm and family prosperous. When they are small, the children are not too burdensome: They can easily be fed and clad with the income received by a big farmer.

One of the most important goals in life, then, is to get grown-up sons. When trying to fulfil this goal, people must also consider the risk of losing one or more children. The infant mortality in Thaiyur is, as we have seen, nearly 30 per cent. An elementary exercise in probability calculus could run like this: Let us say you have six children, three boys and three girls. Probably one girl and one boy will not survive their first year. Four children remain and have survived the most dangerous period in life. Their parents can be reasonably sure that at least one boy will live longer than they themselves.<sup>22</sup>

We can now see that the Government's attempt to propagate "the small family norm" to the people in Thaiyur must fail. It is an attempt to persuade people to do something which most of them will per-

ceive as contrary to their own interests. Be it 30 rupees or a transistor radio as an incentive, people are generally too clever to let themselves be cheated:<sup>28</sup>

Have you heard about family planning?

Yes, I have heard about it. They say it is enough if you have two children. Recently when I was visiting Madras, two family planning brokers approached me and asked me to come for the operation so that I would get 30 rupees. I told them that I am not so foolish that I am deceived by those 30 rupees.

The incentive system builds upon the idea that ordinary people are not clever enough to understand what is best for them. Fortunately, people are more clever than what the Indian Government and its foreign advisors imagine.

Now we are also in a position to understand the origins of "the small family norm." It is a norm emanating from an urban, middle-class setting. In towns, the family has to subsist on the salary of the father and as a consequence the living standard is inversely related to the number of children. The more children, the smaller the share of the cake for each child. Moreover, town children are improductive consumers much longer than those in the rural regions. Ideally, they should be put through high school, pre-university and university, and their studies must be financed by the father's salary.

In the rural regions the economic position of children is different. That is not to say that children are a complete blessing. Small children are improductive consumers, both in the town and village. In poor, landless families, they are a strain on the household budget, especially in times of crisis. As one widow said:

But for the salt fields which provide us with some employment, we would all have starved to death long back due to the failure of the monsoon. Single unitary families are able to carry on their living without much difficulty. Whatever they earn it will be enough for husband and wife. Only people like me are suffering very much with two or three children. With whatever I earn I am able to give my children only poor and insufficient food.

Or, as they said of one man: "He was unable to save anything, because his family was too big." Or take the man who had contracted a disabling illness: "It was really pathetic to see him starve most of the days with six children to provide for." We could multiply the examples: "Really he has many household members and since his brother died he has to look after his children also. So, naturally he feels distressed."

Note that all these examples deal with families in crisis due to drought, death, or disease. Ordinarily, it seems even small farmers and landless labourers are able to provide adequately for their children. One important reason for this is that in poor families, children do not remain improductive consumers as long as they do among the upper and middle

classes. When they are about ten years old they begin to contribute to the family income. Girls take care of their smaller siblings and relieve their mothers who get an opportunity to work outside the home and earn a daily wage. Both boys and girls graze cattle, either their own family's, or those of some wealthy landlord. Children go fishing, and thus add valuable protein to the family diet. Boys participate in cultivation, for example in irrigation work, in watching the standing crop, etc.

There is even a market for child labour in Thaiyur, although it is restricted. Most child-labourers are engaged in cattle grazing, but child labour can also be found in the salt fields, in the commercial sector (shop attendants, waiters), and in the tertiary sector: house servants may be children; pumping cycle tyres is a child speciality; etc.

A complete analysis of the economic functions of children would include an economic analysis of the marriage institutions. As the topic is peripheral, we will not go into the matter. Let us only point out one thing: Even though bride-price is the traditional custom with Harijans, it is gradually being replaced by the upper-caste dowry system. The sums involved are substantial. Therefore "daughters are only a liability," as someone said. Families frequently ruin themselves when arranging for the marriages of their daughters. One lady complained:

We have to spend so much for a marriage. We have to give 200 rupees, or even more if they demand, as dowry to the boy's family. We have to sacrifice so much just to pay the interest on the loans taken in that connection.

So boys are, of course, preferred to girls. This preference is reflected in the sex-ratio in Thaiyur: 978 women per thousand men.<sup>24</sup>

### *The Response to Family Planning in Thaiyur*

In view of the previous analysis it is not surprising that the Family Planning Programme has failed to make headway in Thaiyur. Interviews on the topic proved to be a very delicate matter. Most people got angry. The aversion to the very word "Family Planning" is so great that people often started to quarrel with our interviewers as soon as they heard them mention it. As said in a report:

When the talk turned to the subject of family planning, there began a murmur of protests from the neighbours who were listening to the interview. Hence our conversation had to be abruptly ended.

At one stage of our field work we got into severe trouble. A question in the health interviews made people mistake our female associate, Mrs K. Sundari, for a Government servant representing its family planning scheme. People were so provoked that we were nearly thrown out of the village. Fortunately, the misunderstandings were settled before it took such a disastrous turn.

The negative reaction shows that people are not unfamiliar with the concept of family planning; some people plead to be, but rather it seems as a means of defense. They lie, act stubbornly and even aggress-

sively, sometimes because they fear compulsory sterilization. The question is therefore, not if people know about family planning but rather what they know about it.

One can say that as a folk concept, that is for an ordinary villager, family planning means an operation to sterilize him or his wife, in order to limit his family to only two children. People are not very familiar with contraceptives or with the loop system. Men know that "Nirodh" (the condom) exists, because of the slides shown at the cinema, but they may not know what it actually is. And condoms are not available anywhere near their place.

People's tendency to identify family planning with sterilization is a direct consequence of the Government programme which almost exclusively stresses sterilization. The operation is intensively disliked by an over-whelming majority of all inhabitants of Thaiyur. There are several reasons for this aversion. The most important one is that many people want to have more children rather than less. (Compare Table 1 above.) Those who have no children or only one child are very concerned about this. As reported about one man:

He suffers so much for not having a child. He does not want any property, if only his wife could have a child. His wife cried at the time of the interview when I asked about their children. They both said that people in the village are ostracizing them because they have no children.

One old woman cried during the interview and complained:

My son is working all the time for the livelihood of his family. He is very honest and God-fearing, but he is not blessed with a child, even though he has married three women. As a mother, I cannot bear to think of his misfortune.

In this connection it is worth noting that a nurse and former Swallows volunteer became famous in the village for her ability to help women overcome infertility. During her time people came from far away to be treated by her. It is not surprising that in such circumstances people have little interest in family planning:

I know something about family planning, but I don't believe in it. I myself have only one daughter, one man said.

People who have few children cannot be expected to have any salient attitudes to family planning. This young woman is an example:

I have no opinion about family planning and whether it will be good or bad. I know about family planning. My first child is three years old. I was feeding it until I conceived my second child.

But after how many children do you think it would be good to adopt family planning?

I don't care. I will have as many children as I get.

But how will you be able to give food to all of them?

How can we know beforehand? How can we decide beforehand?

But there are temporary methods of family planning.

I don't know about that. Why are you asking all these questions?

We won't adopt it.

Note the scepticism expressed by this woman towards the questions put to her. The questions are hypothetical and concern a distant future. Her answers cannot be used to predict her future attitude and behaviour. One would wish that sociologists should show the same amount of scepticism when constructing their attitude "items". Take the KAP-surveys (that is, "Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of Family Planning") as an example. They contain questions of the same vague and hypothetical nature as the above interview. The answers to them can in a majority of all cases only be artificial attitudes with little relation to real behaviour.<sup>25</sup>

When asked about it, people often refer to the infrastructure which makes it necessary to have children:

If we have two or three children, family planning would be good. If I myself had three children, I would adopt family planning. But now I have only one child. My wife is pregnant with a second one.

But suppose you get three girls?

Then I would wait for a son. What is the use of having a girl?

Only liabilities!

But isn't a girl as good as a boy?

Only sons will protect their parents in their old age. The girls will go to their husband's place. That is why we want sons only.

People seldom used religious arguments of the following type: Are not children the gift of God? Is a contraception not infanticide, even if the infant is killed in its mother's womb, rather than after birth? God is giving me children. Will He not also protect them? When religious and moral arguments are used, they often stand as rationalizations and legitimations of attitudes which are founded on more mundane realities. Most people have no interest in birth control, and they do not feel any need for it. When confronted with family planning propaganda, they have to defend themselves. If they cannot simply ignore it, or threaten the propagandist, they have to develop rationalizations as a means of defense. One variety is the religious and moral legitimations exemplified above. A widespread counter-propaganda is the (false) view that sterilization is dangerous. Many people hold that view in Thaiyur. One woman even specified:

Nobody in the village will undergo the operation because it is dangerous. One man in Komancheri, one in Thaiyur, and one in Periapilleri died after they had undergone that operation.

Did they die immediately after the operation?

No they died sometime afterwards due to hard work. A person who undergoes that operation should refrain from hard work and eat good and nutritious food.

As we saw above, there is a minority of families in Thaiyur who in

fact are in need of family planning. That is, the families where the mother is weak because of too many or too frequent pregnancies, and/or families who themselves think they have too many children. Despite this, we met only a handful of people who said that family planning was good. They immediately added that most people were against it.

Here is an example of a family with both a subjectively felt need and an objective interest in family planning:

(Wife:)—Now I have got enough children. Can you give me some medicine so that I don't get more children?

(Husband:)—I agree; we cannot feed more children. I am thinking of undergoing some operation.

(Interviewer:)—Then you have to go to the clinic in Kelambakkam. Would you like to have children after some years, if you adopt family planning now?

(Husband:)—There is no need for that.

We found a few such cases in which the family had decided to try family planning. Another example is Ponnammal's daughter: Ponnammal has four daughters and one son. Out of the four daughters, the eldest is married since four years. She is a tuberculosis patient and goes to Tambaram T B Sanatorium every month for a check-up. She gets financial help from Thaiyur clinic. She is now in the fourth month of her pregnancy. She looks very weak. Every Thursday she gets an injection at the clinic. She is very grateful to the people in the clinic, because they are helping her very much. Some six months ago she had an unnatural abortion. She did not like to have a child at that time, so she took some medicine to get it aborted. She became very ill and the clinic people took her to Gosha Hospital in Madras. At that time she was willing to undergo a family planning operation. But according to her mother she refused at the last minute giving her weakness as a reason. The doctors also refused to operate on her because they thought she was too weak to withstand the strain. She recovered and came back to Thaiyur. The clinic people advised her to avoid conception. But she became pregnant again. The clinic people told her: "You said you do not want a child. Now you are pregnant again just two months after the abortion. How can we believe you?" Now she is saying that she will definitely go to hospital for the delivery and undergo sterilization.

In cases like this the operation does not come about even though the woman is willing. One reason for this may be that her husband objects to it. That can be reason enough in a society with a heavy male dominance.

In one case sterilization was actually performed:

At this stage of the interview one lady appeared and started to tell something. She has given birth to four children. Then she was sterilized in a hospital. But now only one of her children is alive. So she is very unhappy for having been sterilized. 'All people ask me why I

have done it,' she says. At that time I was in Gosha hospital. I had three days of labour pain. Then the doctor asked my husband if I could be sterilized after the birth, because otherwise the fifth child could cause my death. My husband agreed to it. And I was suffering so much that I did not know what to answer, so I agreed. Then my fourth child could not open his mouth after four months so it died.'

Because of incidents like this, the Family Planning Programme is backfiring. It creates hostile attitudes among people which alienates even those couples who are potential adopters of contraceptive practices.

### *Family Planning as a Social Phenomenon*

Our analysis must now deal with the question: Is Thaiyur panchayat over-populated?

According to a very crude criterion an area can be defined *absolutely* overpopulated if the means of subsistence contained in it do not suffice to feed its population. In Thaiyur about 1000 households have to subsist on 2,500 acres of tilled land plus pastures, lakes, etc. At present this is more than sufficient. Thaiyur agriculture produces more than is needed for its own consumption requirements. Still agriculture is "under-developed". It does not utilize all its productive potentials. The average yield per acre in paddy production is only about 500 kgs. Modern high-yielding varieties produce more than 3000 kgs, under ideal conditions. *If the productive forces of Thaiyur agriculture were fully developed, the village could easily accommodate twice its population.* Thaiyur can consequently by no means be considered as *absolutely over-populated*.<sup>26</sup>

Still there are indicators in Thaiyur of what a neo-malthusian would call overpopulation: starvation, misery, landlessness, unemployment, urban migration, etc. But this is only a relative overpopulation: People do not starve because there are too many to share too small a cake. They starve because they are exploited and denied their just share of the cake. Landlessness and unemployment are only two symptoms of a system which denies people, not only their means of subsistence, but also their means of production and even their very participation in social production. And it is as a consequence of this exploitation among other things that the cake is not growing. The current agrarian system thwarts rather than promotes the growth of the productive forces.<sup>27</sup>

The tendencies inherent in the economic system continuously produce a *relative over-population* which the neo-malthusians mistake for an absolute one: tenants are evicted from their land; small farmers are expropriated out of their holdings; the employment opportunities for agricultural labourers are decreasing while the number of labourers is increasing.<sup>28</sup>

Now we are able to understand the class-basis of the ideology of population control: The ruling classes which reap the benefits of the current system obviously have no interest in abolishing it. They rightly sense that the growing relative over-population is a most serious threat to their

position. When they say that the curtailment of the population growth is in national interest, they, consequently, ascribe their own interests to the nation as a whole.

The ideology of population control expresses the class-interests of the ruling classes. Their intellectual lackeys have expanded this class-perspective so that it has become an all-encompassing ideology which, masked as scientific theory, is capable of explaining everything. Even the resistance of the people who, as we have seen, generally have no interest in contraception, is interpreted and explained by this ideology, not as a rational and reflected opinion, but as an irrational reaction stimulated by religious obscurantism, illiteracy, superstition and what not. One of our field-workers interpreted the popular resistance to family planning in the following way:

It was evident from their resistance that they had a very peculiar view towards family planning. They still believe that it is their bounden duty to accept any number of children offered to them by God in the midst of suffering. . The essential background lies in their misunderstanding of life and its purpose. The reason may be found in their illiteracy. Perhaps education and self-understanding can rejuvenate them.

Ordinary people, thus, lack the intellectual capability to understand what is best for themselves. The small family is a happy family, even if people refuse to realize it. People must be manipulated into striving for their own self-interest. Such is the patriarchal and authoritarian nature of the Indian Family Planning Programme.

This nature is most evident in its choice of methods.<sup>29</sup> Sterilization has been given priority, because other contraceptive methods are said to be too complicated for villagers to use.<sup>30</sup> In other countries sterilization has only been used on a large scale with animals and with mental patients. In Sweden a man is forbidden to have himself sterilized. The sterilization policy is symptomatic of the attitudes of the Indian upper and middle classes towards the working classes.<sup>31</sup> Professor C D Rajeswaran is only going to the logical end-point of this authoritarian scale: At a seminar held at the Madras Institute of Development Studies and attended by the academic establishment of Tamil Nadu, this professor suggested that:

. . We have to take note of the quality of the population and see what percentage of our population are unwanted. In this country owing to the influence of certain beliefs a sizable section are not producers while they have to consume to exist.<sup>32</sup>

He then goes on to propose that professional beggars, mental patients, patients suffering from communicable diseases and habitual criminals should be compulsorily sterilized:

If we want to develop into a full scale welfare state which is our aim, we should also see that these classes of people are not allowed to contribute to the increase of our population and it is very necessary

that these classes of non-producing consumers are slowly eliminated. According to a short protocol, published in the Bulletin of the Institute no member of the distinguished seminar protested to this proposed policy.

Perhaps Samir Amin is right in his rather gloomy prediction:

The world-wide birth control campaign in the developing world expresses the fears of the 'developed world' in the face of the danger of a radical challenge of the international order, by the peoples who are its first victims. In the extreme case the development of the spontaneous trends of the present system would require the *reduction* of the population of the periphery. The contemporary technical and scientific revolution within the context of this system, in fact, excludes the prospect of productive employment of the marginalized masses in the periphery. The failure of 'voluntary' birth control methods must thus lead to considering much more violent methods, ultimately coming close to genocide.<sup>33</sup>

The Family Planning Programme is a growing failure. It is doomed to remain a failure as long as the motivations of individual couples conflict with the goals of the programme. No reforms, no tactical reconsiderations can make the programme a success. Its unfeasibility can even be demonstrated by means of mathematical deduction as Agarwala has done. He has shown that if the Government wants to reach its goal of zero-growth of population by 1991; and of bringing down the birth rates to 16 per mille in that year (equal to the predicted death rate):

...Roughly 4 million sterilizations have to be performed annually during 1961-66. The number of annual operations will increase to 10 million during 1986-91. In other words, while all the currently married females of the reproductive age above 42.5 or their husbands will have to be sterilized in 1961, all those above age 22 will have to be operated upon in 1991.<sup>34</sup>

This shows that, as Agarwala says, the programme is "beyond the limits of feasibility."

The failure of the Family Planning Programme evidently increases the danger of a fascist reaction along the lines predicted by Samir Amin above. This prospect makes it imperative for the progressive forces in India to fight the neo-malthusian ideology of population control and to fight for a family planning programme with democratic objectives and working methods. Such a programme could be linked with programmes for maternity and child care. It should aim at assisting families with too many children and a felt need for contraception; or families where further pregnancies are a health hazard to the mother. Its objective should not be a drastic reduction in birth rates, because such a reduction can probably not be achieved without a change of the roles of children in the economic structure. The necessary reconsiderations of the present policy are indicated by these reflections by a Swallows volunteer and midwife after two years of work in Thaiyur:

You came here mostly to work with family planning?

They have not been receptive to family planning propaganda. They have said that 'we have no guarantee that our children will survive.' So what should be done is to create such a guarantee. If that can be done through preventive medicine, then I think it is all right with family planning. But, for example, when they get a loop they start bleeding. They and others get afraid. You cannot force them to adopt it. One must create the readiness. Sometimes the men resist. I don't know if it is true that one should strive to tell them that they would get a higher living standard by having fewer children. They are perhaps happier with children than with a radio. The wealth of the poor are their children.<sup>35</sup>

As long as the Government cannot create an economic and social structure which stimulates a reduction in birth rates, where other social institutions can take over the functions now fulfilled by the children, it cannot expect the people to abstain from having children which, in the present social situation, is their only security.

<sup>1</sup> T I Samuel, The Development of India's Policy of Population Control, 1966 *Milbanke Memorial Fund Quarterly*, 1966, 44 (1), part 1, pp 49-67.

<sup>2</sup> K K Pillay and C M Abraham, Population Problems and Family Planning in India, *Monthly Bulletin*, 1971, Vol 1 No 2, Madras Institute of Development Studies.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p 15

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p 17

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p 18

<sup>6</sup> This case-study of family planning in a Tamil village is part of a study called: "Pills against Poverty: A Case-study of the Introduction of Western Medicine in a Tamil village." The whole study will be published during 1975. For the reader who is interested in more details about the village and its economy we refer to our article: Some Features of the Political Economy of Agriculture in a Tamil Village, *Social Scientist* Vol 2 No 1 pp 27-42 and No 3 pp 14-23, 1973. We are grateful to Lars, Bondestam, Norrköping, for constructive criticism on this study.

<sup>7</sup> The DMK Government won the 1967 elections partly due to their promise to sell subsidized rice for one rupee a measure to the people. This ignorant villager (!) was not able to distinguish between the Government and its officials.

<sup>8</sup> The easiest way of calculating the rate of population growth in Thaiyur is to compare the 1961 population 4,088 (Census of India 1961, Chingleput, Vol II p 270) - with the 1969 population which according to our census was 4,814. This yields a yearly growth rate of 1.8 per cent. But we have also made an independent estimate by means of a sample survey in which we collected vital statistics for one year, April 1969 to April 1970. We then arrived at the same result, that is, a yearly growth rate of 1.8 per cent (with a 5% confidence interval of + 0.3 per cent). The fact that the two estimates tally with one another is an indication of their reliability. It seems that out-and in-migration balance each other. One indication of this is the fact that the natural rate of increase tallies with the estimated rate of population growth.

<sup>9</sup> Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama, An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations*, p 1400, Pantheon, New York, 1968.

<sup>10</sup> Our own calculation based on data given by Census of India, 1961 Vol 1, part III (ii), Household Economic Tables, pp 40-41, Government of India Press, New Delhi.

- <sup>11</sup> We regard ourselves as belonging to this category.
- <sup>12</sup> Klas De Jonge and C Vorkevisser, Fertility in Two Rural Areas in Tanzania: A Dependent Variable. Paper presented to the seminar on *Population and Economic Growth in Africa*, Afrika Studie Centrum Leiden, 18-22, December, 1972.
- <sup>13</sup> Probably "errukka cedi" which according to the Tamil Lexicon (1934) is *Calotropis Gigantea*.
- <sup>14</sup> Lars Bondestam, Population Growth Control in Kenya, *Research Report* No 12. The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, 1972; M Douglas, Population Control in Primitive Groups, *British Journal of Sociology*, London. 17 (3) 1966, pp 263-273; J H Konter, The Implications of Family Planning in the Changing Socio-economic Structure of the Nyakusa, Rungwe District, Tanzania. Paper presented to the Seminar on *Population and Economic Growth in Africa*. Afrika Studie Centrum Leiden, 18-22, December, 1972; Mahmood Mandani, *The Myth of Population Control: Family, Caste and Class in an Indian Village*. Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1972.
- <sup>15</sup> Douglas, *op.cit.*
- <sup>16</sup> De Jong and Vorkevisser, *op.cit.*
- <sup>17</sup> Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, Aldine-Atherton, 1972.
- <sup>18</sup> Ronald Meek (ed) *Marx and Engels on the Population Bomb*, The Rampart Press, Berkeley, California, 1971, pp 18-23.
- <sup>19</sup> Teodor Shanin, *The Awkward Class, Political Sociology of Peasantry in a Developing Society-Russia 1916-1925*, Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, 1972.
- <sup>20</sup> Joint families are not common in Thaiyur (they amount to only 9 per cent of all families.)
- <sup>21</sup> Mandani, *op.cit.*
- <sup>22</sup> A similar calculation has been made by de Jonge and Vorkevisser: "Gradual decline in infant mortality in Rungwe, Tanzania has been insufficient to ensure parents who have experienced the sudden death of children in their childhood that they have a living son in their old age when they need support unless they reproduce to the limits of their capacity. To be reasonably certain (80%) of the survival of one son when the father is 65 years old, a couple must bring seven children to the world. It is hardly controversial to assert that no reduction in fertility is foreseeable before dramatic improvement of health services". (de Jonge and Vorkevisser 1972, *op.cit.*)
- <sup>23</sup> David G Mandelbaum, Social Components of Indian Fertility, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual Number 1973, vol. VIII, 4-6, pp 151-172. Instead, people will cheat the Government. Many will let themselves be sterilised when they have already passed their reproductive age.
- <sup>24</sup> In the West the common pattern is the reverse, that is an overweight of women. But in India, as in pre-revolutionary China (See W Hinton, *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village*, Monthly Review Press, New York 1966) there are more men than women. There may be many explanations for this, but one plausible cause is the preference for boys. The common explanation (cf. example Mandelbaum *op.cit.* p 183) is that girls, although they are not intentionally neglected, tend to get slightly less attention and care than boys. On the aggregate level, this may result in a slightly higher mortality for girls than for boys.  
  
In a personal communication Bertil Pfannenstill, Lund, pointed to an alternative explanation: The sex-ratio can be a product, not of a differential mortality for boys and girls, but of an uneven balance already at birth. Since boys are preferred to girls, families who have already got boys tend to abstain from further children. But those families who have only got girls have to continue producing children. Therefore, there are more boys born than girls. Unfortunately, we have not met with any demographic data against which these alternative hypothesis can be tested.
- <sup>25</sup> Mandain, *op.cit.*, Mandani criticizes these surveys denying them their pretentious claims of being scientific measurement.

- 26 Samir Amin seems to be right when he states that there are only a few areas in the Third World which are over-populated, according to his definition: The West Indies, the Nile Valley, the delta regions of Asia, and Java. Most other areas, including the southern part of the Indian subcontinent cannot be considered absolutely over populated. Samir Amin, Underpopulated Africa, Reprinted in *Family Planning in Ethiopia*, No 3 August 1973, Ethiopian Nutrition Institute, Addis Ababa, pp 86-87.
  - 27 Goran Djurfeldt and Staffan Lindberg, Some Features of the Political Economy of Agriculture in a Tamil Village, *Social Scientist*, New Delhi, Vol II-No 1 (pp 27-42); and Vol II No 2 (pp 14-23).
  - 28 We will make a full analysis of these phenomena in our forthcoming work on the economy of Thaiyur Panchayat. We have sketched an analysis in our 1973 article.
  - 29 Another evidence is the 30 rupees incentive scheme. Recently it has been proposed that family size should be considered by the government when employing people in public work schemes etc. (Mandelbaum *op. cit.* p 157). Men with too many children should be barred from such employment unless they consent to participate in a family planning programme.
  - 30 According to our opinion this is wrong. If they are motivated, no method is too complicated. One indication of this is the great risks that many women are prepared to run to get an abortion. Compare the drastic method to reduce population among hunters, (Sahlins *op. cit.* p 34; and Douglas *op. cit.*)
  - 31 Hans Schenk, India: Poverty and Sterilization, *Development and Change*, 1973-74 Vol V (1) pp 36-53. He shows that the programme in practice is also directed primarily towards these classes.
  - 32 C D Rajeswaran, Application of Scientific Methods and Family Planning, *Monthly Bulletin*, Madras Institute of Development Studies, vol II No II, pp 52-76.
  - 33 Samir Amin, *op. cit.*, pp 93-94.
  - 34 S N Agarwala, The Arithmetics of Sterilization in India, *Eugenics Quarterly*, New York 13 (3) pp 209-213, 1966.
  - 35 J de Leeuwe, NVSH and IPPF and Population Policies, Paper presented to the Seminar on *Population and Economic Growth in Africa*, Afrika Studie-Centrum, Leiden 18-22 December 1972.
- Compare also the following statement by the Indian delegates to the WHO Regional Committee, 1969: "Family Planning becomes a controversial issue as soon as it is identified with population control; but there is no difficulty in introducing family planning as a normal activity of a maternal and child health programme designed for the protection of mothers and children. In fact the integration of family planning into maternal and child health services represents the best and more rational approach." Health Progress in India, 1969, as presented by the delegates to the WHO Regional Committee, *Indian Journal of Pediatrics*, Vol 36, pp 490-494.

PARTHA CHATTERJEE

*Modern American Political Theory*  
*with Reference to Underdeveloped Nations*

THE most modern bourgeois political theories relating to underdeveloped countries have two primary concerns: one, the establishment of a "developed" polity on the liberal democratic model, and two, the maintenance of political stability in the process of this development. Both flow from the material and ideological interests of world monopoly capitalism. Yet, these twin concerns lead to certain inevitable contradictions which no bourgeois theory is able to resolve. Curiously, the course of development of this theoretical literature in the United States in the last twenty-five years has a striking resemblance to British colonial theories in the nineteenth century. Both run against the same basic contradiction, namely the structural impossibility of normal capitalist development, economic, political and social, in a colonial or post-colonial society.

I

The concept of political development is a relatively recent innovation in political theory. The reasons are not difficult to trace. The idea of the development of a polity according to a certain pattern or direction—development, not merely change—implies a prior concept of social progress, that is, a notion of social change in a desirable direction. And the history of the idea of progress, we know, is only a little more than two hundred years old.

Perhaps the first clear reference, explicit or otherwise, to a concept of the development of a polity occurs in the political discussions of the English utilitarians,<sup>1</sup> although the ideological roots of their concept can perhaps be traced back to Montesquieu or Adam Ferguson. To the utilitarians there was a specific problem of policy which related to their concern about the best methods for the administration of British colonies, particularly India.<sup>2</sup> So they constructed the rudiments of a theory of stages of development of a society (the levels of civilisation, as they termed it) and the kinds of political institutions suitable for each stage. The most developed polity was naturally one which had attained the highest level of civilisation (implicitly, England in the nineteenth century!) and its political institutions were those of representative democracy, where the governing few were kept in check by the governed many through a series of stable institutional arrangements. Societies which were lower down in the scale of civilisation could not afford to have such advanced institutions, since the governed many were incapable of operating the delicate machinery of representative government. The best possibility of development of these backward societies lay in a prolonged period of benevolent imperial rule, whereby through progressive legislation and the gradual development of advanced political institutions, the level of civilisation of these societies would be raised.

The concept of political stability, on the other hand, is as old as political philosophy itself. An ordered polity has perhaps been the ultimate concern of all political theory, and starting as far back as Plato's *Republic*, and particularly *The Laws*, the question of stability has remained a fundamental issue of political philosophy as well as political science. What is distinctive about the modern discussion on this problem is the necessity of relating the concern about political stability with the reality of social change. Nowhere in the modern world is change such a vital issue as in what is variously known as the underdeveloped, or developing, or non-Western, or "third," world. Specifically, the current Western literature on political development is expressly concerned with the relations between general social, and particularly political, development and the stability of democratic institutions. How far is social change and modernisation compatible with the working of democratic institutions? If there are incompatibilities, which should gain priority? And what, in the light of these relations, is the optimal strategy for modernisation? These are the central issues with which the theory of political development is concerned.

## II

The years following the Second World War saw dramatic changes in the political arrangement of imperialism. It was a period of profound crisis for the traditional imperialist powers, Britain and France in particular. The process of decolonisation which occurred in the next decade or so had a host of contributory causes—the emergence of a new interna-

tional system in world politics, the crisis of imperialism at home following the social devastation of the greatest war in human history, the growing strength of nationalist movements in the colonies. Formal decolonisation, however, was accompanied by two developments which are of crucial importance—one, the politics of modern imperialism (or neocolonialism, whatever one wishes to call it), and two, the emergence of the United States as the unquestioned leader of the capitalist powers. These two developments must be borne in mind when assessing much of the recent literature in the social sciences, for the great splurge of interest of American scholars in the countries of the underdeveloped world is not unrelated to the emergence of the United States as a global power of the highest rank. Throughout the fifties and sixties, American social scientists immersed themselves in the task of unfolding the manifold mysteries of the cultures and institutions of Asian, African and Latin American countries, and a very important product of this furious academic activity is the modern theory of political development.

### III

Let us confine ourselves to the results of this study. The first phase was rather short. Its fundamental conclusion was that the political development of the underdeveloped countries could only be the result of economic development—a rapid industrialisation of their productive systems and a thorough modernisation of their cultural superstructures. The most comprehensive statement of this position was made in Rostow's *Stages of Economic Growth*, a book very presumptuously, but nevertheless significantly, subtitled "a non-communist manifesto." The critical point in the transition from a traditional to a modern industrial society, according to Rostow, was what he called the point of "take-off." To reach "take-off," certain social prerequisites were necessary such as a relatively high level of education, a new modernising elite, a banking system, transport, commerce. In order to help achieve "take-off," the developed West must ensure the necessary external aid, financial, technological and, in parentheses, political. Once "take-off" is reached, the growing economy could presumably take care of itself, by creating and distributing the necessary wealth and by establishing and working the new institutional structures to stabilise a democratic order. Policywise, it was, therefore imperative upon the West to "demonstrate that the underdeveloped nations—now the main focus of Communist hopes—can move successfully through the preconditions into a well established take-off within the orbit of the democratic world, resisting the blandishments and temptations of Communism. This is, I believe, the most important single item on the Western agenda."<sup>3</sup>

### IV

This theory was short-lived. It was realised very quickly that rapid economic development, whatever its results in the long run, was

highly destabilising in its immediate consequences. The higher the rate of industrialisation in an underdeveloped society, the greater and sharper were the discontinuities between the pre-industrial and industrial situations. This always produced radical political movements among the newly mobilised sections of the population, creating serious threats to the stability of the political institutions of that country.<sup>4</sup> Lipset commented on the rapid industrialisation thesis:

Unfortunately for this theory political extremism based on the lower classes, communism in particular, is not to be found only in low-income countries but also in newly industrializing nations.<sup>5</sup>

If political development was to proceed on the basic premise that a stability of some sort must be maintained with respect to the political arrangements of the underdeveloped countries (which, in concrete terms, meant that communism must be prevented), then rapid industrialisation was definitely not the answer.

The next phase in the growth of the theory of political development is perhaps best represented by Lipset's own work. *Political Man* was regarded as representing, in many ways, a major departure from the established methodological orientation of American sociology, which at this time was unquestionably dominated by the approach systematised by Talcott Parsons. The Parsonian method, whose pedigree is traced perhaps rather one-sidedly, to Max Weber and his study of the cultural foundations of the origin of capitalism in Europe, led the inquiry into social action and social institutions, including politics and political institutions, through a study of the values and norms of a society. The result was, of course, a framework which stressed the elements of consensus within a social system. Lipset, on the other hand, placed primary emphasis on a study of the *interests* of various groups in society. In unravelling "the social bases of politics," therefore, Lipset at least came to grips with the problem of conflict in society. The result was labelled by none other than Parsons himself as, "a non-dogmatic and non-political Marxian" approach.<sup>6</sup> The characterisation itself is patently ridiculous, but it does indicate the break which Lipset's book represented in the development of political sociology out of the established discipline of American sociology.

Lipset's method was that of multivariate analysis. Instead of trying to identify any one particular variable which determined the development of a stable democratic system of the Western kind, which still remained the *telos* of political development, he attempted to find a cluster of variables which correlated with what he identified *a priori* as developed political systems. His investigation showed that factors such as wealth, industrialisation, education and urbanisation all correlated fairly highly with European and English-speaking stable democracies, and then, at a decreasing rate, with European and English-speaking unstable democracies and dictatorships, Latin American stable dictatorships. This cluster of

variables, which together he called economic development, was therefore, crucial in estimating the prospects of the growth of a developed polity out of a backward society.

But even within this cluster of variables, all were not equally important. Citing Daniel Lerner's study on the Middle East,<sup>7</sup> Lipset emphasises quite strongly that of all these variables, it is education which is definitely a necessary condition for democracy.

Education presumably broadens man's outlook, enables him to understand the need for norms of tolerance, restrains him from adhering to extremist doctrines, and increases his capacity to make rational electoral choices.<sup>8</sup>

Further, at the level of individual behaviour,

the higher one's education, the more likely one is to believe in democratic values and support democratic practices.<sup>9</sup>

It is only *after* there is a sufficient spread of literacy, and therefore a wide area for the operation of the media of communication that democracy, that "crowning institution of the participant society," begins to function as a stable social order.

The main thrust of Lipset's argument in identifying economic development, that is wealth, industrialisation, education and urbanisation, as the chief indicator of the prospects of political development leading to the establishment of a stable democratic order ends up in a proposition which the wisdom of Aristotle had grasped more than two thousand years ago.<sup>10</sup> Lipset says,

Increased wealth, affects the political role of the middle class by changing the shape of the stratification structure from an elongated pyramid, with a large lower-class base, to a diamond with a growing middle class. A large middle class tempers conflict by rewarding moderate and democratic parties and penalizing extremist groups.<sup>11</sup>

Gradual economic development, by spreading education and urbanisation and increasing wealth, would create such a large, moderate and democratically minded middle class. On the political plane, a broad-based system of authority and legitimacy would be established by preventing the emergence of deep cleavages among the population over a small number of highly salient divisive issues. Repeating the familiar "cross-cutting cleavages" thesis of pluralist democratic theory, Lipset states:

..... individuals under cross-pressure—those belonging to groups predisposing them in differing directions, or who have friends supporting different parties, or who are regularly exposed to the propaganda of different groups—are less likely to be strongly committed politically.<sup>12</sup>

Of all the evils which beset the path to heaven, the most fearsome is the development of intense ideological politics: the extensive political mobilisation of large numbers of people around highly emotive issues leads to the growth of "mass society,"<sup>13</sup> which is the very antithesis of an orderly

democratic society. It is important that this point be borne in mind, since this is where later theorists depart radically from Lipset's approach.

## V

The next phase is best represented by Apter.<sup>14</sup> In discussing questions of economic development and political stability, Lipset used relatively simple and familiar conceptual categories like class, class interest, ideology, legitimacy, authority, and he handled these within a framework which concentrated mainly on the structure of political authority in its relation to the stratification system. There was no pretence of coping with the totality of a social system. The theoretical framework presented in Apter's book does attempt to do this; it is consequently extremely complex in its sophistication. Almond and Coleman had presented a structural-functional model of a political system which was of little use beyond the comparison and classification of different political systems at specific points of time in relation to the Western democratic model of a developed polity.<sup>15</sup> Apter's framework deals with both the structural characteristics of a political system, and actions of individuals and groups at the behavioural level, and in addition, by introducing a normative dimension to the problem, supplies the system with a dynamic logic.

Let us examine his framework in detail. Apter's basic model of the social system in its general aspects may perhaps be called Parsonian, but he borrows most heavily from the detailed structural model developed by Marion Levy.<sup>16</sup> The key concept here is that of the *role*. In discussing systemic change, and particularly changes of structure, therefore, the main emphasis is on identifying new roles—the adaptation of old roles to new situations, the creation of new roles, the resistance offered by those refusing to accept new roles. It is only after new roles are created that systems can change.

The whole question of the transition from traditional into modern societies is, therefore, seen in terms of changing roles. Apter defines modernisation as

the spread of roles which, functionally linked and organized in industrial settings, make their appearance in systems lacking an industrial infrastructure.<sup>17</sup>

The modernised system, meaning thereby a stable but innovative society with differentiated and flexible structures and having the technological skills and knowledge needed for industrialisation, is a necessary prerequisite for the advanced industrial society. "... it is not possible to industrialize without modernization."<sup>18</sup> In considering development, therefore, Apter is emphasising the crucial importance of the political institutionalisation which is necessary for an industrial revolution.

What exactly are these modernising roles which are so crucial? These roles are what Apter calls *careers*. Careers are not merely occupations; they are not professions either. They entail a certain authority

which derives from competence based on expertise. Careers imply a recognition, within the institutional structure, of their legitimacy as roles which contain the knowledge and skill necessary for the modernisation of a society. Modernisation, indeed, is "a progressive translation of as many occupations as possible into careers."<sup>10</sup> Those who occupy these career roles constitute a modernising elite. In any modernising society, the sections of the elite which perform in the most important modernising roles are the technical and professional career services, the functionaries of modernising political parties, and the military-civil service bureaucracies.

Having identified the key modernising roles, the problem then becomes one of defining the sort of political structure which is most conducive to the establishment and effective functioning of these roles. The transitional process is here divided into four stages—(a) establishing the first modernising polity, (b) development from early to late modernisation, (c) transition from late modernisation to early industrialisation, and (d) establishing the industrialised polity. Different types of political structures are suitable at each stage. The establishment of the early modernised polity is best accomplished by a mobilisation system, one which welds the political community into a collective unit creating new values, and educating and socialising the entire community into those values, and emphasising the primary importance of realising the potentiality inherent in those values. The mobilisation system operates through a militant party organisation, and government enterprise is the chief instrument of economic growth. The development from early to late modernisation, however, is more optimally secured under a modernising autocracy or a neomercantilist society. The former is a centralised authority system with a relatively traditional ideology, the monarch representing the unity of the nation. The neomercantilist society does not have a formal monarchical structure—it is usually republican in form—but it also employs a traditionalist ideology and attempts to institutionalise a basically charismatic form of authority. The rationale of all economic activity in both the modernising autocracy as well as the neomercantilist society is political, the form employed being a mixture of private and public enterprise. The third stage of converting late modernisation is again best accomplished by a mobilisation system. The final stage of transition into a modern industrial society requires, for the establishment of a stable democratic order, a reconciliation system, which essentially is the liberal form of representative government as known in the Western democracies.

A crucial question, however, still remains to be answered. Why should traditional society stagnating at a low level of stable social equilibrium attempt to modernise at all? The answer is supplied by a normative assumption of the model. Apter says

The work of modernization is the burden of this age. It is an objective that is not confined to a single place or region, to a particular

country or class, or to a privileged group of people. Modernization, and the desire for it, reaches around the world.<sup>20</sup>

Today, every society wishes to modernise. Modernisation, consequently, is a matter of choice, and in every society of the world, this choice is being made.

All around us new moral communities are being established, and the context of moral fulfilment is modernization.<sup>21</sup>

New values are being created, and hence, new roles are established. The whole analysis regarding suitable structures and ideologies follows.

To link up the work of Apter, and the stage of thinking it represents, with the previous analyses of political development, the main point to be noted is that the liberal dogma of accepting only stable representative structures as the media for any kind of development has been given up. In an oblique reference to the work of Lipset or Almond, Apter states quite emphatically:

Difficulties arise for comparative study because we have enshrined moral principles in models that have served well in a Western political context. The models we derive from concepts of justice, equity, and good society may be quite inappropriate for modernizing societies . . . . Specifically, what I reject are the comfortably formulated descriptive models that are assumed to embody abstract principles of virtue, when, in reality, they embody one's preferences and prejudices—for example, the definition of democracy as the operation of two-party or multi-party systems, since 'totalitarian' systems exclude more than one party.<sup>22</sup>

Democracy, then, is what is obtained at the end of political development. In the period of transition, democratic institutions are not conducive to modernisation or industrialisation, and only a modern industrial society can provide the social bases for democracy. What is needed in the transitional period is a relatively stable structure of authority which can create new values and legitimise political action to realise those values. Given the urge for modernisation, the desired political structure may be utterly undemocratic.

## VI

Another important theoretical development now needs to be linked up with this discussion. The concept of the *plural society* grew out of the study of colonial societies, and a major part of contemporary discussions regarding political stability in developing societies hinges around this concept. The concept was first introduced by James Furnivall, a British colonial administrator who spent a lifetime as a civil servant in Burma. In his study of the Dutch East Indies,<sup>23</sup> Furnivall defines the plural society as:

comprising two or more elements or social orders which live side by side, yet without mingling, in one political unit.

In such a society, communities are separated on the basis of race, language or religion, each community having a distinct set of cultural values which are incompatible with those of the other communities. There is, consequently, a complete lack of consensus in the polity. Only an externally imposed authority can hold such a society together, and the obvious candidate is a colonial power.

Furnivall's plural society concept was subsequently handled in two completely divergent ways. One set of scholars regarded the plural society as potentially a pluralistic one. The multiplicity of ethnic divisions was seen as either contributing to, or being subordinated by, other cleavages along economic or voluntary associational lines, thereby mitigating the possibility of sharp conflicts and strengthening the basic consensus on values. The studies of Stephen Morris on the Indians of East Africa, Daniel Crowley on Trinidad, and particularly Burton Benedict on Mauritius,<sup>24</sup> take this position. Morris highlights the presence of factions within ethnic groups which very often lead to political alliances cutting across ethnic lines. Crowley points out the familiarity of the members of one ethnic group with the cultures of other ethnic groups, and calls this situation a condition of "plural acculturation" contributing to the growth of a social consensus. Benedict, applying the general formulations regarding social development in the sociological theories of Weber or Tönnies, emphasises the transition of a society divided mainly according to primordial groups into one where the chief dimensions are on the basis of class stratification. Economic modernisation, according to Benedict, creates cross-cutting cleavages which foster cooperation among different ethnic groups. Certain other scholars, J D Mitchell for example, have also leaned towards the consensualist position without, however, expressly depending upon the logical formulations of the functionalist theory. For him, the question whether ethnic divisions result in consensus or conflict is purely a matter for empirical observation: no logical necessity is involved here. Mitchell, in his own study, however, cites numerous instances where tribal divisions break down as a result of various economic and political pressures.<sup>25</sup>

The contrary position rests upon a rejection of the entire theoretical basis of functionalism as a social theory. The critique of functionalism has by now become quite voluminous,<sup>26</sup> but the main point which is relevant to the present discussion is this. The functionalist theory defines a society as having a minimum consensus on values, "a common value system" as Parsons calls it. Consequently, since all extant societies have such common values, any empirical research proceeds on the assumption that such common values exist, and the researcher, therefore, does not regard disintegrative tendencies, or conflict, or the use of power to control such conflict, as being theoretically very significant. It is this assumption which the conflict theorists of plural society reject. M G Smith, for instance, notes that in spite of the growth of a structure of class strati-

fication as the result of economic development, cultural pluralism and its translation in politics do not disappear.<sup>27</sup> Van den Berghe similarly notes that in spite of the presence of non-ethnic divisions in society, political leaders very often use, and even magnify, ethnic divisions in order to gain support in the arena of political competition.<sup>28</sup>

The conflict theorists' case has recently been stated systematically, and very forcefully, by Rabushka and Shepsle.<sup>29</sup> The basic social divisions in any pre-modern society which is also plural, according to them, are primordial, mainly ethnic, that is, along lines of race, tribe, language, religion or region. The most relevant characteristic of such divisions in cultural diversity, represented not only in distinct and incompatible value systems but also in separate institutional arrangements coexisting within a single political unit. With political modernisation in the form of the introduction of some kind of democratic institutions, politics exclusively follows these cultural lines. This defines the plural society. Because of the institutional basis of these ethnic groups, and the high emotive salience regarding their cultural values, these are the groups which can be most readily organised and sustained for political action. Consequently, "it is only natural that, when several of those communities are agglomerated into a single political entity, the local politician uses his community as base of operations." Democratic institutions foster these ethnic divisions by dividing up the territory into constituencies which are in most cases culturally homogeneous and by placing the criterion of victory in the strength of numbers. For political leaders, therefore, the cultural group is the most obvious source of support. In systemic terms, this analysis leads inevitably to the conclusion that in order to maintain the political integrity of such a plural society, and to carry through programmes of modernisation (if these are to be attempted at all), the rulers must either manipulate the instruments of democratic government or throw them overboard and replace them with some form of authoritarianism.

Attacking the problem from a very different angle, therefore, this line of theoretical inquiry also ends up in the conclusions of Apter.

## VII

Huntington's work<sup>30</sup> attempts to put together all these theoretical developments into a single framework. While Apter's book was concerned more or less exclusively with constructing and detailing a conceptual framework within which the process of modernisation might be studied comparatively, Huntington is truly remarkable for his tremendous command over the empirical details of the actual politics in the developing countries. Using this mass of details to establish his rather simple proposition Huntington brings out the many varieties of development or decay which a traditional society might undergo in the process of change from a traditional society. Huntington's method is strikingly similar to the classical Aristotelian one, and many of his limitations are also germane to that method.

The basic proposition of Huntington's book is this. The whole question of political stability in a changing society depends upon the ratio between two variables, social mobilisation and political institutionalisation. If mobilisation proceeds at a faster rate than institutionalisation, the result inevitably is instability. Why? "Institutionalisation is the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability. The level of institutionalization of any political system can be defined by the adaptability, complexity, autonomy and coherence of its organizations and procedures."<sup>31</sup> This is an explicitly Parsonian definition, the implications of which we will explore below. Social mobilisation, on the other hand, is a process by which:

major clusters of old social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behaviour.<sup>32</sup>

It occurs through urbanisation, the spread of literacy and education, the growth of mass media, all of which form, as we have seen, the very core of modernisation. Now, social mobilisation in itself is a highly destabilising process. It exposes large groups of people previously integrated into the traditional culture to completely new life styles, new attitudes, and thereby creates high levels of aspirations and wants. Traditional society is unable to change itself quickly enough to satisfy these aspirations, and this leads to dissatisfaction and frustration. These dissatisfied groups are ready material for political mobilisation into movements demanding radical political change, and hence there is political instability.<sup>33</sup>

The concern for stability consequently leads Huntington to add another dimension to the problem posed by Apter. Modernisation is a pre-requisite for the development of an industrial society. Modernisation, however, necessarily implies social mobilisation. And social mobilisation without a correspondingly high level of institutionalisation is destabilising. Consequently, social mobilisation must necessarily be accompanied by a simultaneous process of political institutionalisation whereby changes made in organisations and procedures are given time to acquire value and stability. Social mobilisation, in other words, should be gradual, and must keep pace with institutionalisation. If mobilisation outpaces institutionalisation, the result is not development, but rather political decay, the degeneration of the polity into what Huntington calls the praetorian society, a condition of permanent political instability and chaos, a society racked by continuous and violent mass political movements—the most extreme version of the "mass society".

Which traditional societies are best adapted for peaceful transition to modernisation? Huntington distinguished between two kinds of traditional societies—one pluralistic in structure with dispersed power and rigid stratification, the other differentiated with highly centralised power and an open and fluid bureaucratic structure. The former is the classical feudal system; the latter the centralised bureaucratic state. Contrary to

what may be expected, it is the former kind of traditional system which is better suited for a gradual and peaceful process of modernisation. The feudal tradition is more conservative, and hence can adapt itself to a gradual process of broadening the base of political participation as modernisation proceeds. The fluid bureaucratic system with highly centralised power is much more likely to generate radical egalitarian movements mobilising large sections of the masses and broadening political participation at a rate far outpacing the adaptability of the traditional political institutions. The examples Huntington cites are feudal Japan as opposed to bureaucratic China, the feudal Fulani-Hausa system of Nigeria as opposed to bureaucratic Buganda.<sup>84</sup>

Coming to the question of the political structures most suitable for stable modernisation, Huntington first considers the role of monarchies. Traditional monarchies have no alternative but to promote social and economic reform, but this necessarily implies a threat to their own existence. The ensuing structural change may be a very limited one as in a *coup d'état* (Thailand, for example). Here there is not much scope for further broadening of political participation, and modernisation, therefore, must remain relatively stagnant. A second alternative may be to remove the entire institution of monarchy, without replacing it with any alternative institutions which acquire legitimacy (the illustration is the Kassim coup in Iraq). Here the polity degenerates into a praetorian state. The third alternative is a full-scale revolution producing a modern party dictatorship. Most societies, according to Huntington, are unfortunately (read fortunately!) too backward for revolution.<sup>85</sup> In certain contexts, a modernising military dictatorship may be the most effective means for building strong political institutions. This however, would be the case only in those societies where most social groups are relatively inarticulate, that is where political participation is limited, as in Pakistan or Mexico or Turkey or South Korea or El Salvador.<sup>86</sup> All of these methods, however, are merely temporary arrangements to fill the gap between power and legitimate authority which exists in all changing societies. The only lasting way of solving this problem, according to Huntington, is to develop two-party systems, both parties assimilating the rural masses into their political organisations, and thus producing "the bridge between rural and urban areas which is the key to political stability in modernizing countries."<sup>87</sup>

## VIII

The question of political stability has become inextricably linked with the modern bourgeois theory of political development. The resulting contradictions within the theory are, therefore, directly related to the very formulation of the problem. As we had mentioned at the very beginning of our discussion, social development necessarily involves large-scale changes both in the material bases of a society as well as in the structures

of ideas and values. Any historically rooted theory of development must, therefore, not only take account of small-scale quantum changes in particular social structures keeping the basic character of the general social system intact, but also admit the necessity of wholesale changes in the very nature of the social system. A theory of development which also holds on to the idea of political stability as a primary assumption, must necessarily run into this basic contradiction. Surely, it must be a very simple historically valid proposition that no major changes in the structure of values and norms can occur (and this is what the concept of modernisation implies) without major changes as well in the structure of political authority, as indeed in the more basic material structures related to the process of production.

The fundamental inadequacy of the recent Western writings on the subject of political development is, therefore, related to this concern with political stability which prevents the development of any comprehensive theory of historical change in the underdeveloped societies. The result is reflected in the selection and definition of primary conceptual categories and basic assumptions of the different models of development we have reviewed. Lipset is the only theorist who has explicitly recognised the influence on political development of stratification groups and their separate interests; this, however, is entirely at the behavioural level. He, therefore, neglects to develop a theory of the politicalisation of classes and the role of political leadership in shaping the movements which arise out of conflicting class interests. Moreover, Lipset lacks a structural theory of developing political systems, which as Apter and Huntington show, is crucial in determining the course of development. The conflict theorists of plural society also have a theory of group interests; their position, however, is premised on a complete rejection of class stratification as a significant variable in the politics of plural societies.

It is precisely the concern with stability that leads Apter to adopt the Parsonian framework whereby the study of consensual values, as opposed to group interests, becomes central to the study of society. Apter assumes a moral consensus in all developing societies regarding the need for modernisation. His structural theory, consequently, proceeds on the assumption that every one wants to modernise, and the problem thereby is reduced to the identification of optimal structural characteristics at each stage of development. His framework completely ignores the fact that everyone may not have the same urge to modernise, that everyone need not mean the same thing by modernisation, that there may exist politically significant groups who may not want to modernise at all. Huntington, from a different perspective, adopts another Parsonian assumption which is theoretically unacceptable. A crucial concept in Huntington's work is institutionalisation. Now, institutionalisation is defined as the process by which organisations and procedures acquire legitimacy and stability. A society is stable if its organisations and procedures are institutionalised; conversely, the

institutions of a society have acquired legitimacy if the society is stable. The tautology is obvious. Huntington's theory of stability, whereby stability is a function of two variables, is not an operational and testable theory since one of the two variables is not an independent variable at all. Such circular reasoning, as those familiar with the critique of functionalist theory will know, is germane to the very logic of functional analysis. The theory of political development demonstrates most vividly the critical inadequacy of functionalist sociology as a conceptual framework for the study of macro-social change.

The modern theory of political development has the same teleological character as the classical utilitarian theory on colonial societies. The ultimate goal of development is the representative democracy of the West European and North American countries. It is with this end in view that all our theorists have prescribed strategies for political development. In the years immediately following the Second World War, this theory reflected a buoyant optimism. The curse of the non-western world was its poverty and economic backwardness, and that was the breeding ground of communism. All that was needed, therefore, was a generous dose of Western aid which would lead these countries through the path of economic take-off into the promised land of democracy. The subsequent development of theory reflects the growing pessimism in Western minds regarding the future of the developing societies. Apter suggests that the transitional phase of modernisation was the most difficult, and to build the cultural and attitudinal basis for the developed industrial society a period of undemocratic rule was necessary. The plural society theorists regarded most underdeveloped societies as being inherently unstable, where democratic politics only reinforced and exaggerated existing ethnic cleavages, and where integrity and stability could only be maintained by the authoritarian use of power. In Huntington, finally, we find the realisation that not only rapid economic development, but the very process of modernisation itself, is destabilising. The pace of modernisation, therefore, must be slowed down to allow the traditional society to adapt itself gradually to a broader base of political participation.

Indeed, there is much more fundamental theoretical contradiction in the face of which all bourgeois theories regarding social development in underdeveloped countries must inevitably flounder. The theoretical goal of bourgeois development in the present day, derived from the premises of the bourgeois ideology of liberalism, is the model of the advanced capitalist societies of Western Europe and North America—their economy, their political structure, their culture. Ironically, the historically indubitable fact is that this advanced capitalism would not have emerged in Western Europe and North America had there not been a vast colonial empire in the rest of the world. And the dialectical relationship which thereby developed between metropolitan capitalism in the West and dependent underdevelopment in the colonies necessarily precluded the

possibility of a similar growth towards advanced capitalism in Asia or Africa or Latin America. Consequently, the very existence and continuance of advanced capitalist societies in the West makes it impossible for the underdeveloped countries to grow beyond a state of dependent and stunted capitalist development. In the absence of an independent and full-grown bourgeoisie, the economies of these countries, if they remain within the orbit of the world capitalist system, must maintain a level of stagnation within a range varying from total subordination to foreign monopoly capital to different mixes of compradorship, independent national capitalism and partial state capitalism. In colonial and post-colonial societies, there is no organic class which satisfies the sufficient conditions for the formation of a bourgeoisie which can itself assume the position of social leadership and thereby carry the economy, and thence society, on to a path of industrial and democratic revolution. In the absence of such a hegemonic bourgeois class, the post-colonial bourgeoisie must share power, either with the traditional feudal and semi-feudal classes, or with sections of the upper petty bourgeoisie. The political structure of such a society will, therefore, be determined by the internal configuration of power within the alliance of the ruling classes and the combined strength of this ruling alliance against those whom it exploits. A framework of formal political democracy may exist in situations where, as in India, the ruling classes, in the course of a nationalist movement, have come to enjoy a certain degree of support based on its populist image. This populist image, however, has to be continuously refurbished in order to maintain this class rule within the framework of political democracy; whenever it becomes inconvenient, the forms of even such political democracy are compromised, and even scrapped. This, however, is only a reflection of the relative *political* strength of the ruling classes. Socially the bourgeoisie remains inherently weak, and cannot therefore mobilise the internal resources necessary to lead the economy towards an industrial revolution. In most underdeveloped countries, however, the ruling classes do not even enjoy this degree of legitimacy to permit class rule by elections; they must necessarily rely on a much more naked use of force. It is quite clear, therefore, that the basic conditions necessary for successful capitalist development are absent in all colonial and post-colonial societies, and this is so because of the very logic of exploitation under colonialism. Consequently, it is also clear that there cannot be any viable political development along the liberal bourgeois path in such post-colonial societies.

This is the basic theoretical contradiction which no bourgeois theory can resolve. The only viable path of economic and political development of an underdeveloped society is premised on a total break with the forces of world monopoly capitalism and proceeds towards a socialist revolution. This no bourgeois theory can admit. Hence, we have the endless search for groups which are "modern" in their outlook, that is, groups which will be culturally receptive to the West and will agree to enter into economic

relationships with it, and groups which will at the same time maintain some measure of political stability at home, that is, protect these economic relationships from the uncertainties of rapidly changing political leadership. Hence, the twin objectives of political development in contemporary bourgeois political theory are modernisation and stability. In contrast with the early flush of optimistic liberal enthusiasm regarding the democratising effects of economic development, it is now quite clearly admitted that "political development" is better served by a prolonged period of economic stagnation while "institutionalisation" can proceed gradually.

The links between these shifts in the theoretical position and the shifts in the official neocolonial policies of the Western powers, particularly the United States, can be shown quite clearly. The Rostow stage is linked to the period when Western policy proceeded on the assumption that the economic development of the backward countries was the key to making the world safe for democracy. The crucial positions here were occupied by those countries of Asia which were already on their way to the take-off stage and which had already established some form of democratic institutions. The policy implication was that massive doses of Western financial and technological aid had to be pumped into the economies of these countries in order to help them achieve the all important "take-off." The shift in policy occurred when it was realised that financial aid did not necessarily bring that elusive "take-off" within the grasp of the stagnant economies of these countries, and more important, that it bred divisive political movements challenging the existing regimes. Economic development and modernisation sharpened existing social cleavages and created new ones. Not only that, the independent development of capitalism in the underdeveloped countries often impelled the bourgeoisie of the third world countries to demand greater independence from Western economic interference in their economies. The focus then shifted from the politically relatively developed countries to the relatively backward and less democratic ones, and the keynote of policy shifted from economic development to political stability. Existing structures of power had to be preserved, even at the cost of economic development and modernisation. The bastions of the status quo in these societies were the professional middle classes, or a military oligarchy, or perhaps a charismatic autocrat. These were the sections which could be counted upon both to contain divisive movements arising within the country, and to remain allied to the West in their external relations. The new theory, as seen in Apter or Huntington, therefore, rationalised the new policy by granting these people the historical role of modernisers, modernisers who were never the less conservatives. These were consequently the people who would take the traditional society through a path of orderly modernisation and supervise a political development without revolution.

The wheel has thus come full circle. In a process which is strikingly similar to the course of development of liberal opinion in Britain regard-

ing colonial policy from the beginning to the end of the nineteenth century, American social science has moved within a quarter of a century since the end of the Second World War from the liberal faith expressed by Lipset in economic progress and democracy to the realisation found in Huntington that it is against the interests of the world capitalist system for the underdeveloped countries to achieve any social state other than that of a stunted capitalist growth.

The modern bourgeois theory of political development is, therefore, in all its stages the "scientific" embodiment of the ideology of a new colonialism.

(The writer is indebted to S K Chaube, S Dattagupta, Barun De and Asok Sen for their valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper.)

- <sup>1</sup> See particularly, John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* 1861, (many editions), chs. 2, 4, 13; James Mill, *The History of British India* 1820, *passim*; James Fitzjames Stephen, *Liberty Equality and Fraternity* 1873.
- <sup>2</sup> On the influence of the utilitarians on British colonial policy in India, and the underlying assumptions of that policy, see especially Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959,) and Raghavan Iyer, Utilitarianism and All That, in Raghavan Iyer, (ed), *St. Anthony's Papers*, 8, South Asian Affairs, No 1 London: Chatto and Windus, 1960.
- <sup>3</sup> W W Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960, p 134.
- <sup>4</sup> See particularly Mancur Olson, Rapid Growth as a Destabilizing Force, *Journal of Economic History*, 23 December 1963.
- <sup>5</sup> S M Lipset, *Political Man*, Garden City, New York, Doubleday, 1960, p 54.
- <sup>6</sup> See Lipset's Introduction to the Anchor Books edition of *Political Man*, Garden City New York, Doubleday Anchor, 1962 pp xix-xxxvi.
- <sup>7</sup> Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society*, Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1958.
- <sup>8</sup> Lipset, *op. cit.*, p 39.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p 40.
- <sup>10</sup> "...the best form of political society is one where power is vested in the middle classes,.....good government is attainable in those states where there is a large middle class large enough, if possible, to be stronger than both of the other classes, but at any rate large enough to be stronger than either of them singly;.....The reason why democracies are generally more secure and more permanent than oligarchies is the character of their middle class, which is more numerous, and is allowed a larger share in the government, than it is in oligarchies." Aristotle, *Politics* (trans.) Ernest Barker, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952, p 182.
- <sup>11</sup> Lipset, *op. cit.*, p 51.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p 77.
- <sup>13</sup> William Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957.
- <sup>14</sup> David E Apter, *The Politics of Modernization*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.
- <sup>15</sup> Introduction to G A Almond and J S Coleman, (eds), *The Politics of the Developing Areas*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960 pp 1-64. It is for this reason that we have deliberately neglected to discuss this approach which, it must be noted, has nevertheless enjoyed considerable influence for a number of years in the field of comparative politics, less because of any intrinsic theoretical merit than the

dominating position of their proponents within the professional structure of the discipline in the United States.

- <sup>16</sup> Marion J Levy, *The Structure of Society*, Princeton, J J Princeton University Press, 1952.
- <sup>17</sup> Apter, *op. cit.*,
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p 67.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p 163.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p 1.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p 15.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*,
- <sup>23</sup> J S Furnivall, *Netherlands India* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1939. Also, Furnivall, The Political Economy of the Tropical Far East, *Journal of the Royal Central Asiatic Society*, 29, 1942, pp 195-210, and Furnivall, Some Problems of Tropical Economy, in Rita Hinden, (ed), *Fabian Colonial Essays*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1945, pp 161-184.
- <sup>24</sup> H S Morris, Indians in East Africa: A Study in a Plural Society, *British Journal of Sociology*, 7, 3 October 1956, pp 194-211; Morris, The Plural Society, *Man*, 57, 8 August, '57, pp 124-125; Morris, Some Aspects of the Concept of Plural Society, *Man*, 2 June '67, pp 169-184; D J Crowley, Plural and Differential Acculturation in Trinidad, *American Anthropologist*, 59, 5 October, '57, pp 817-824; Burton Benedict, *Mauritius: Problems of a Plural Society*, London Pall Mall, 1865, and Benedict, Stratification in Plural Societies, *American Anthropologist*, 64, 6 December '62, pp 1235-1246.
- <sup>25</sup> J D Mitchell, *Tribalism and the Plural Society*, London: Oxford University Press, 1960. Also see John Rex, The Plural Society in Sociological Theory, *British Journal of Sociology* 10, 2 June '59, pp 114-124, and Malcolm Cross, Cultural Pluralism and Sociological Theory: A Critique and Re-evaluation, *Social and Economic Studies* 27, 4 (December, '68, pp 381-397).
- <sup>26</sup> Some of the important critiques from within the tradition of bourgeois social theory, particularly in reference to its applications to politics, are Carl G Hempel, The Logic of Functional Analysis in L Gross, (ed), *Symposium on Sociological Theory*, New York: Harper & Row, 1959, pp 271-307; Alvin W Gouldner, Reciprocity and Autonomy in Functional Theory in *Ibid.*, pp 241-270; Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*, London: Heinemann, 1972; Richard S Rudner, *Philosophy of Social Sciences*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966, ch 5; Robert E Dowse A Functionalist's Logic, *World Politics*, 18, 4 July '66, pp 601-622; John C Harsanyi, Rational-Choice Models of Political Behaviour vs Functionalist and Conformist Theories; *World Politics*, 21, 4 July '69, pp 513-538; W G Runciman, *Social Science and Political Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969, ch 6; A James Gregor, Political Science and the Uses of Functional Analysis, *American Political Science Review*, 62, 2 June '68, pp 425-439; A J Groth, Structural-Functionalism and Political Development: Three Problems, *Western Political Quarterly*, 23, 3 September, '70, pp 485-499; Nancy E McGlen and Alvin Rabushka, Polemics on Functional Analysis: Variations on a Belaboured Theme, *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 15, 1 February, '71; Alvin Rabushka, Functionalism, Comparative Politics and Scientific Explanation: Have We Reached a Dead-end? *Government and Opposition* Summer 1971.
- <sup>27</sup> M G Smith, *The Plural Society in the British West Indies*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965.
- <sup>28</sup> Pierre L Van den Berghe, *Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective* New York, John Wiley, 1967; Van den Berghe, Pluralism and the Polity: A Theoretical Exploration in L Kuper and M G Smith, (eds), *Pluralism in Africa*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969, pp 67-81.
- <sup>29</sup> Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth A Shepsle, *Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability*, Columbus, Ohio, Charles Merrill, 1972.

- <sup>30</sup> Samuel H Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University Press, 1968.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p 12.
- <sup>32</sup> Karl Deutsch's definition quoted by Huntington, *Ibid.*, p 33.
- <sup>33</sup> This is the well-known "frustration-aggression" hypothesis which has given rise to a sizable literature in Political Sociology. This is now been summarised systematically using social psychological analysis and fairly sophisticated empirical techniques in Ted Robert Gur, *Why Men Rebel*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1971.
- <sup>34</sup> Huntington, p 166-176.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 177-191.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 237-266.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p 460.

V C KOSHY

## *Land Reforms in India Under the Plans*

THE twin objectives—eradication of poverty and attainment of economic self reliance—as enunciated under the Five Year Plans were sought to be achieved by developing the two vital sectors of the economy, industry and agriculture. India being predominantly an agricultural country with three-fourths of its population directly dependent on land and contributing 49 per cent of the total National Income, the problem of agricultural development assumes primary importance. The above basic objectives were to be obtained in a restructured Indian society based on the 'socialistic pattern' of society so that the stress in the plan documents naturally had to be placed on the combined approach of economic growth and social justice. Hence the question of land reforms as a vital policy measure has always aroused a lot of controversy and emotion not only because it directly affects agricultural growth but also since it affects the existence of a vast majority of the toiling masses in the countryside.

According to the Plan documents considerable emphasis was laid on land reform starting with the First Plan in 1951. The major thrust of the programmes since then has been to ensure social justice and increase productivity. Based on the above principles the Fifth Plan draft document repeats the commitments made in the earlier plans which were never fulfilled: that the objectives of land policy have been

to remove such motivational and other impediments to the increase in agricultural production as arise from the agrarian structure inherited from the past and also to eliminate all elements of exploitation and to ensure social justice within the agrarian system so as to provide equality of status and opportunity to all sections of the rural population. To accomplish the above ideals, strategies were drawn for abolishing all intermediary interests between the state and the tiller of the soil, regulating rent, conferring on tenants security of tenure, and, eventually, ownership rights, imposing ceiling on agricultural holdings, distributing surplus land among the landless agricultural labourers and the small peasants and bringing about the consolidation of landholdings.<sup>1</sup>

This paper attempts to review the implementation of land reforms during the last twenty-seven years under uninterrupted Congress rule at the Centre as well as in most of the States and to assess the possible impact these reform measures have made on the agrarian structure and society. This performance presents a contrast with that of the non-Congress left Governments in some states, although they were in power for a very short duration such as in Kerala and West Bengal. This would reveal the background of the spreading land struggles in recent years leading to mass agitations and violence involving the peasantry, political parties and the governments and will also shed light on the circumstances that forced the Union Government to include a number of reform measures in the Five Year Plans.

An analysis of Congress agrarian legislations during the last twenty-three years of Indian economic planning reveals that the aim of Government policy has not been to abolish landlordism; on the contrary it has led to the transformation of feudal landlords into semi-feudal and capitalist landlords and created a stratum of rich peasants with the hope that they would rally around the ruling class. In reality, except for a few marginal cases concentration in land has increased intensifying exploitation. As a result, the economic conditions of the weaker sections of the rural poor have deteriorated resulting in extreme poverty and unemployment. As compared to only 52 per cent of the rural population in 1960-61, below the poverty line, 70 per cent of the population in 1967-68 was found to be below the level.<sup>2</sup> According to the Reserve Bank of India estimates also, 70 per cent of the people in rural India were below the poverty line in 1967 with an income of less than Rs 20 per month.<sup>3</sup> Now with the general price level especially of foodgrains rising at an alarming rate a much larger number of people will be found to be below the poverty line.

Contrary to the tall claims repeatedly made by the Congress governments at the Centre as well as in the States regarding the progress on the implementation of radical land reforms it is widely accepted that their programmes have neither helped to increase productivity nor arrest the exploitation of the peasantry. Even the Planning Commission had to admit this fact. The report of the Task Force on Agrarian Relations con-

stituted by the Planning Commission admits that,

The programmes of land reform adopted since independence have failed to bring about the required changes in the agrarian structure.

The report further brings out the truth that,

In no sphere of public activity in our country since independence has the hiatus between the precept and practice, between policy-pronouncements and actual execution, been as great as in the domain of land reform.<sup>4</sup>

Their review goes on to show that the government has failed to protect the tenants even from exorbitant rents and evictions, besides the more basic solutions to the land problems. This makes it evident that in contrast to the declared objectives, the ruling Congress governments had only made use of these reform measures to preserve and protect their vested class interest on the one hand and to adopt progressive postures on the other, in an attempt to cultivate a popular image among the masses. Even the very purpose of this honest exposure of the failure of land reforms, specially at this time when agrarian unrest is growing fast, seems to be to create an impression that the Congress government planners have noticed the weaknesses of these measures and are now serious to remove them. But the Fifth Plan programmes indicate the contrary.

This becomes clear if we analyse the emergence of peasant struggles in India. The peasantry was mobilised and used during the freedom struggle under an attractive slogan of 'land to the tiller' along with definite assurances to realise it soon after the attainment of independence. This movement had gradually grown along with the national movement and reached its highest tempo towards the close of 1946. It had spread to several districts in different states like West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Maharashtra, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Coupled with this a massive peasant uprising which started in 1946 in Telengana in Andhra Pradesh continued under different conditions until 1951.<sup>5</sup> On the occasion of the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of India's Independence, the *Peasant and Labour* noted in an editorial:

The All-India Kisan Sabha and its various units played a vital role in drawing the millions of peasants into active participation in the anti-imperialist movement, in helping the peasants to realise that their own immediate partial demands like rent and revenue reduction, stoppage of evictions, reduction in debt burden, fair prices for agricultural produce, cheap credit facilities, tax reduction along with their basic demand for land and for abolition of landlordism, are inseparably connected with the central demand of the entire nation—the demand of complete freedom from British rule. Millions of peasants participated in the struggle for the attainment of complete independence and thousands of them suffered martyrdom in the course of these struggles. The demand for agrarian reforms became part and parcel of the demand for independence and democracy in

India. But after coming to power the Congress leadership not only went back on its promises, but also let loose unprecedented repression against the peasantry which was demanding radical agrarian reforms and acceptance of their other just demands.<sup>6</sup>

However, the net outcome of these struggles was that when India became independent the Congress leaders were forced to give some thought to this outstanding fundamental problem. A special committee headed by Jawaharlal Nehru was appointed in November 1947 to work out directives for the Congress economic policy. The recommendations of this Committee which were approved by the All India Congress Committee in 1948 called for eliminating all intermediaries between the tiller and the State and for fixation of the maximum size of holding. Following this, another special committee known as the Congress (Kumarappa) Agrarian Reform Committee was set up in 1949 to work out an agrarian policy for India. This Committee in contrast to the official programme of the Congress Party held that the main task was the immediate abolition of all forms of feudal exploitation of the peasantry, of course, on payment of adequate compensation. However, this Committee did not make any positive recommendation to fix a ceiling on large landed property.

The recommendations of these two committees obviously got reflected in the First Five Year Plan. It contained a separate chapter on 'Land Policy' outlining the broad policies to be pursued during the plan period. On the question of agrarian relations the plan document explicitly stated that, "the future of land ownership and cultivation constitutes perhaps the most fundamental issues in national development." But to the Congress party however, land reform meant primarily the abolition of intermediary rights and regulation of tenancies, thereby leaving vast areas of land possessed by the big landlords undisturbed. To quote from the Congress party statements, it was pointed out in a memorandum submitted to the 73rd session of the Indian National Congress by the Congress Forum for Socialist Action:

It would be instructive and interesting to keep in mind the fact that the first Draft of the First Five Year Plan had set its face against ceiling upon landholdings, and it led to such an all India criticism...that in the final draft the ceiling idea had to be incorporated.<sup>7</sup>

It only reveals the power and influence wielded by the landed class within the ruling party that it could evade the fundamental question of land ownership and cultivation. But since the leadership was compelled to include a provision on ceiling, the plan document made only a vague passing reference to the question of ceiling by stating that there should be an upper limit to the amount of land that an individual may hold. On the other hand, in an attempt to sabotage this very provision the plan makers took a negative attitude and stated that,

If it were the sole object of policy to reduce the holdings of the larger

owners with a view to providing for the landless or for increasing the farms of those who now have uneconomic fragments, the facts at present available suggest that these aims are not likely to be achieved in any substantial measure.<sup>8</sup>

Against this background, when the State governments gave shape to the policy pronouncements under the First Plan and enacted legislations abolishing the intermediaries and regulating tenancy the affected landlords successfully challenged these agrarian legislations in the High Courts and the Supreme Court under articles 14, 19 and 31 for violating their fundamental right to hold property.

In this context it must be noted that when the Indian Constitution was framed, the ruling party with a view to create a progressive image promised through the Preamble to the Constitution to secure for all its citizens: 'Justice, social, economic and political.' Paradoxically enough when the Indian Constitution was adopted, though it contained both constitutional guarantees to the landlords and an assurance of social justice, the right to property was a 'fundamental right' enforceable through a court of law while in contrast the provisions for the attainment of social justice were pushed aside to the 'directive principles of the state policy' which were non-justiciable.

It is worthwhile to know that out of the 35 amendments so far made in the Constitution of India, the most significant and controversial amendments pertain to the fundamental rights and all of them to one single article—article 31 dealing with the compulsory acquisition of property by State. Moreover, all these amendments were the result of adverse judgements of the Supreme Court.

On the other hand, the growing peasant movement under the influence of the left and democratic political parties posed a challenge to the authority of the ruling party. Therefore, under this consistent pressure the Constitution was amended twice during the first plan in 1951 and in 1954 in order to protect the land legislations from litigation.

In the Second Five Year Plan though the abolition of intermediaries and tenancy reform were provided for there was little advance on the earlier position regarding ceilings. The plan recommended ceiling legislation in order to give to the rural poor "a sense of opportunity equal with other sections of the community." Further, it suggested that a reasonable ceiling should be fixed at three times a family holding. Whether the ceiling was to be fixed per individual or per family as a unit was left to the discretion of state governments.<sup>9</sup> The Third Plan also made no new proposals on ceiling but reiterated the position taken in the Second Plan.

But with the Congress debacle in the 1967 general elections a thorough heart-searching was done by its leadership to find out the factors responsible for the mass rejection of the Party. It was then that a Ten Point Programme was hurriedly adopted in June 1967 which included radical land reforms. When the Congress formally split in 1969, it became

essential for the New Congress to take a more militant stand to ensure the very survival of the Party. Therefore, in a meeting held at Bombay the Party adopted a still more progressive posture with regard to its socio-economic policies. The policy resolution on land reforms stated that,

The Congress recognises the crucial importance of land reform, both as a measure of social justice and as an important input of agricultural development.

The resolution further directed the state governments to adopt a number of steps "as a matter of urgency" including implementation of all existing land legislations by 1970-71, take over of surplus land and its distribution to landless labourers etc.<sup>10</sup> Naturally therefore, the changed circumstances with the new alignment of political forces in the country and the precarious position of the ruling party in Parliament were reflected in the Fourth Five Year Plan which commenced in 1969. Unlike the previous plans the Fourth Plan document admitted that "there are many gaps between objectives and legislation and between the laws and their implementation." Hence, it was asserted that,

One of the important tasks of the Fourth Plan will be to try to ensure that land reforms become a reality in the village and the field.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, in the Fourth Plan a clearer stand was taken on the principal measures to be carried out.

The severe economic hardship on account of growing unemployment and rising prices, created a serious situation of acute mass discontent among the millions of landless poor. Land being the basic source of livelihood, the demand for land became the key demand of the agrarian struggle. This struggle assumed a new dimension in many states, with mass resistance of tenants to evictions which were being carried out at that time by landlords in order to save maximum area of their land from the ambit of ceiling legislation acts. The peasant movement took a new turn when landless labourers and small peasants began to forcefully occupy areas of surplus land in many parts of the country under an organized movement of left and democratic political parties. In Kerala, powerful struggles of agricultural labourers and hutment dwellers were launched from January 1 1970 for the implementation of the Agrarian Reforms Act. Lakhs of hutment dwellers asserted their rights on their homestead land, despite heavy repression by the landlords supported by the police. Thirty-two persons were killed and 50,000 arrested. Similarly, the peasants of West Bengal were successful in defending their possession of land and cultivating about 3.5 to 4 lakh acres of *khas* or *benami* lands which they occupied during the United Front Government period in 1967-69. In addition, they organised collective defence against landlord terrorism, and harvested their crops with volunteers standing guard. About 50 peasants were murdered during the struggle for land and another 17 were killed while defending the harvest. Similar struggles of peasants and agricultural workers have taken place in many other states as well, particularly in Bihar, Tripura, Tamil

Nadu, Assam and Orissa.<sup>12</sup>

Analysing the *Causes and Nature of Agrarian Tensions* since 1966, the Ministry of Home Affairs pointed out in the study that tensions between tenants and landlords, between agricultural labourers and employers and between poor peasants and big landowners were increasing in the rural areas in recent years. Of the three types of tensions, the agitation for the distribution of land to the landless and the poor peasants elicited the maximum response and was also widely spread geographically. The study also reveals that over 82 per cent of the reported agitations and struggles in the rural areas were led by the very small land owners and agricultural workers against landlords. Forcible occupation of land has been a recurring phenomenon in states such as Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. In addition there occurred mounting struggles of tenants for tenurial security and fair rent, struggles of agricultural labourers for minimum wages and tribal people's fight against exploitation by the jemmies and money-lenders.<sup>13</sup>

It is under this threat of a serious wave of agrarian unrest sweeping the country that the Chief Ministers met in New Delhi on September 20, 1970 to discuss the agrarian crisis and to suggest remedial measures. But they failed to arrive at a consensus on the question of land ceiling and the Conference referred the matter to a Committee consisting of the Union Agriculture Minister as Chairman, and some Chief Ministers as members. This Committee known as the Central Land Reforms Committee, made certain recommendations after eleven months, on August 3, 1971 to serve as guidelines for new ceiling legislation in the states. The Committee recommended a ceiling for a family of five members within the range of 10 to 18 acres of irrigated land capable of growing two crops and upto 54 acres in case of dry lands, and the term family was defined to include husband, wife and minor children. Additional land was allowed for each member in excess of five in a family upto the maximum of twice the ceiling.

This was followed by a meeting of the State Congress Presidents and Secretaries together with the Chief Ministers and Central Cabinet Ministers. The meeting deferred the issue by appointing a nine-man Committee headed by Mohan Kumaramangalam on May 29, 1972.<sup>14</sup> The Committee submitted its report in June 1972. The Congress Working Committee in its meeting on July 22, 1972 watered down the recommendations of this Committee on certain vital points to benefit the landlords. The Congress Party itself was badly divided on the issue; although the Congress Working Committee had released the nine-man Committee Report, it did not allow a debate on this question in the All India Congress Committee meeting. The Economic Policy Resolution itself was dropped from the agenda to save the Congress leadership from an embarrassing situation. Thus, the most important issue of land reforms was not

discussed in the highest body of the Congress which met for the first time after the general elections.

Although the Congress had accepted the nine-man Committee's recommendation for a ceiling of 10 to 54 acres, the Working Committee changed the definition of the family by excluding the major children from the definition of a family of five members and hence, allowed each major member to keep separately land upto the ceiling limit. Moreover, the Working Committee decided that ceiling laws should be applied retrospectively from January 24, 1972 instead of September 26, 1970 as recommended by the nine-man Committee which gave sufficient time to landlords to dispose off their surplus land. The state governments were also given the freedom to decide about granting exemptions to orchards, plantations, and to religious and educational trusts etc.<sup>15</sup> Although the Congress Working Committee had resolved that legislation on ceiling should be passed by various State legislatures by December 31, 1972, only some states had implemented the Party directive.

The loud talk about radical land reforms on the one hand and the time elapsed between a legislative proposal and its enactment and non-implementation on the other, have enabled the landlords to successfully evade the legislation and defeat the very purpose of land ceiling and redistribution of land. A spate of fictitious transfers, sales, benami transactions, partitioning of family property etc. by big landlords with the intention of circumventing the ceiling legislation took place throughout the country which went unchecked. Splitting up of agricultural estates had already taken place so that by the time the new legislations came, very little land in any case was available for distribution. From this it becomes evident that the government had tactically avoided all genuine land legislations which would have basically altered the land relations and the agrarian and social structure of the society thus posing a challenge to the present ruling class. The Planning Commission Report itself gives various reasons for the non-implementation of land reform measures.

The major conclusions drawn by the Task Force for the poor performance of land reforms are lack of political will, inadequate land policy, legal hurdles and the absence of correct updated land records. The Committee observed that enactment of progressive measures of land reform and their efficient implementation call for hard political decisions and effective political support, direction and control. But the absence of this crucial factor has been amply demonstrated by the large gaps between policy and legislation and between law and its implementation. It therefore clearly shows the double role played by the bourgeois-landlord government since 1947. The Congress Party in its attempt to champion the cause of the rural poor, coined attractive slogans of radical land reforms while on crucial issues which affected the interest of the property owners the government sided with the powerful landlord lobby. The Report itself states that,

Considering the character of the political power structure obtaining in the country it was only natural that the required political will was not forthcoming.

Another factor responsible for the failure was the weak administrative machinery for implementing land reforms. The responsibility for implementation of land reforms rests with the revenue administration of the States whose traditional function is the collection of revenue and maintenance of law and order. The attitude of the bureaucracy towards land reform is generally lukewarm, and often apathetic. This is, of course, inevitable as the Task Force points out because as in the case of the men who wield political power, those in the higher echelons of administration are also big landowners themselves or they have close links with big land owners. Surprisingly enough, no State has taken necessary steps to forge a suitable administrative apparatus to cope up with the task of implementing land reform measures. And as a matter of fact there have been cases, the Report says where administrators who tried to implement land reform laws honestly and efficiently were hastily transferred elsewhere.

The law courts are a major obstacle in the way of implementing land reforms. A large number of legislations were invalidated by the High Courts and the Supreme Court. The Report asserts that in a society in which the entire weight of civil and criminal laws, judicial pronouncements and precedents is thrown on the side of the existing social order based on the inviolability of private property, an isolated law aiming at the restructuring of property relations in the rural areas has hardly any chance of success. And whatever little chance of success there was, completely disappeared because of the loop-holes in the laws and protracted litigation. It may be recalled that it was the same Congress representatives who in the Constituent Assembly incorporated necessary safeguards in the constitution to save private property, which the Supreme Court has jealously safeguarded and whenever it became necessary to appease public opinion they resorted to amending the Constitution in the desired spheres. The Report admits that the land reform laws were defective in many ways; some loop-holes were deliberately built in, while others were the result of poor drafting. The logical conclusion is that the ruling class has cleverly made use of the executive, legislature and judiciary to successfully block all social reforms affecting property relations.

The existing record of rights were prepared mainly for the purpose of assessment and collection of land revenue. In a judicial system which is highly biased against the poor, the absence of correct up-to-date record of rights have been used by the landlords for large scale eviction of tenants from the land actually tilled by them. The Task Force Report clearly mentions that a programme aimed at the redistribution of income and wealth in the rural areas cannot succeed unless the beneficiaries can produce evidence of their rights. No amount of legislation will help the tenants in the court unless he can produce his tenancy in the form of

written documents. This he can do only if there is a reliable and up-dated record of tenancies with presumptive evidentiary value. But the available records are false due to either bonafide errors arising out of lack of knowledge of facts or of law on the part of the recorder or deliberate wrong recording from malafide motives. Despite this alarming situation and even when fully apprised of the seriousness of this problem no genuine effort has been made by the State governments to prepare the land records. There were provisions in all five year plans to undertake village surveys and to prepare land records but no attempt has been made so far by the states.

However, the Task Force Committee contradicts its earlier findings by making the statement that "land reforms in India has been a gift from the benign government", totally disregarding the long and arduous struggle of the peasantry and the working class for their rights. The Committee is also mistaken when it attributes the failure of land reform to the "absence of pressure from below". The history of the peasant movement in the country provides ample testimony to the contrary. While it is true that the beneficiaries of land reform, particularly share-croppers and agricultural labourers, are weighed down by crippling social and economic disabilities, it is wrong to suggest that land reform was a gift from the Government in the absence of pressure from the masses. On the contrary, it is the ruling Congress government who have unleashed ruthless suppression on the growing peasant movements in various parts of the country along with the landlords by using the repressive state machinery. Even the Planning Commission Report recognizes the fact that, "peasant's organizations, kisan sabhas and the like, have a very significant role to play" to increase the bargaining and staying power of the peasantry.<sup>16</sup> But the long experience of the land reform struggles shows that the Government policy so far has been to destroy by suppression all existing militant peasant organisations. It is well known that the champions of land reforms within the Congress Party and the government are precisely those persons who are landlords themselves. This class bias becomes evident if we look at the reform programmes undertaken during the last Four Plans and being pursued in the Fifth Plan. Let us examine the measures taken by the Government such as the abolition of intermediaries, tenancy reforms and ceiling on landholdings.

### *Abolition of Intermediaries*

On the progress of the abolition of intermediaries, the draft Fifth Plan repeats the claim made thirteen years ago in the Third Plan document that necessary legislation for the abolition of intermediary tenures, on payment of compensation was adopted in almost all the States by 1954. Implementation of the enacted laws has since been practically completed all over the country and only a few minor intermediary tenures still remain to be abolished. But the periodical government reports available on this issue contradict this claim. As the correct records on landholdings

are not available, a fact which has been admitted by the government, nobody is sure about the extent of the effected reforms. However, a comparison with the statewide review done by the Task Force, reveals that a number of intermediary tenures affecting sizable sections of the poor peasantry still remain to be abolished in most of the States. Even in Kerala which is far ahead of other Indian states on the enactment and implementation of land reforms, even though several legislations for the abolition of intermediaries were enacted after 1954 there are several intermediary rights yet to be abolished which cover a sizable area affecting a large number of tenants.

Moreover, by asserting repeatedly in the Third, Fourth and Fifth Plan documents that about 20 million tenants are estimated to have come into direct contact with the State as a result of the abolition of intermediary tenures and resumption of large areas of privately owned forest land, grazing land and cultivable waste land by the State one begins to wonder whether there had been any progress at all during the last 13 years because ever since the launching of the Third Plan in 1961 the number of persons who benefited from the land reform measures has remained constant while there are claims about several measures implemented during this period. While it has to be accepted that some progress has been made in this regard, whatever has been done in this sphere to effect socio-economic justice to the weaker sections has been negated by the payment of huge compensation to the landlords amounting to Rs 670 crores. This figure, again, is misleading since the Third Plan document drafted 13 years ago also calculated the compensation as Rs 670 crores, that is, Rs 520 crores as compensation and Rs 150 crores for interest charges. Curiously enough, the planners of the Fifth plan complained that the implementation of these reforms imposed a heavy administrative and financial burden on some of the state governments, while at the same time they themselves have earmarked the expenditure on compensation for the next five years. But five years ago, the planners were worried about the delay in making the payment to the landlords. It was emphasised in the Fourth Plan that "progress made in the payment of compensation to ex-intermediaries in some states has been slow". Therefore, they wanted the assessment and payment of compensation to be expedited, particularly in Bihar, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.<sup>17</sup>

### *Reform of Tenancy*

Despite governmental efforts to ensure security of tenure and fixation of fair rent in different states the problem of tenancy has grown in magnitude over the years. There had been leasing of land on a large scale even in areas where intermediary tenures did not exist and sub-leasing where such tenure existed. The prevailing rent rates are high and the tenants enjoyed little security of tenure.

(a) Security of tenure: Even after the implementation of four five year plans, the position of tenants, and particularly of share-croppers,

continues to be insecure especially in Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab and Haryana. In accordance with the policy laid down in the Second Five Year Plan the laws enacted by several states provided for resumption of tenanted lands by landowners for personal cultivation. The term 'personal cultivation' was wide enough to cover all cases of cultivation under the landowners' own supervision or the supervision of a member of his family or even his agents. Under the protection of this clause the landlords resorted to mass eviction of tenants. The implementation of consolidation of holdings laws has also led to large scale ejectment of insecure tenants. Then there were large scale ejectments through the device of 'voluntary surrenders'. In many cases, tenancies have been pushed underground and converted into '*Naukarnameh*'. Even where the law provided for security of tenure, tenants have, in practice, found it extremely difficult to claim tenancy rights successfully as most of the leases, particularly crop-sharing arrangements, are oral and informal. Wolf Ledejinsky in a report on Land Reform in India observed that:

Perhaps as many tenants have lost their tenancies as have been made secure on the land through deliberate rather than accidentally faulty legislation.<sup>18</sup>

Forcible ejectment of tenants have taken place particularly in states where attempts are made to prevent it. Certain states like Gujarat, Kerala, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Manipur and Tripura have made provisions for verification of surrender by revenue authorities. But the powerful landlords with the help of the police forcibly evicted the tenants. When the tenants had approached law courts for justice, they had no written record of evidence to prove their claim. So the court had directed the police to eject the illegal occupants of the land. According to the Task Force Committee, there is nothing to prevent a determined group of landowners from adopting any method to throw out the tenant physically from the land. They say:

It has been found that very often the landowners short circuit the provisions of the tenancy law affording protection to share-croppers by having recourse to preventive sections of the code of criminal procedure or to litigation in civil courts.<sup>19</sup>

This fact is substantiated by the steady increase in the number of landless agricultural labourers as recorded in the 1971 census, even after allowing for the difference in definition of worker between the 1961 and 1971 census. The number of cultivators has fallen in 1971, the number of agricultural labourers has increased from 32 to 48 million and non-workers in rural areas has also risen.<sup>20</sup>

(b) Fixation of fair rent: Since the First Five Year Plan efforts were made to bring down the exorbitant rate of rent charged from the tenants. The customary level of rents commonly paid by tenants-at-will, non-occupancy tenants and share-croppers over the greater part of the country was one-half or more of the produce. In addition to rent, very

frequently there were customary and other payments which enhanced the burden borne by tenants. The First Five Year Plan suggested that a rate of rent exceeding one-fourth or one-fifth of the produce would call for special justification. The subsequent plans recommended that the rent should not exceed one-fourth or one-fifth of the gross produce. Although by now several states have enacted legislation stipulating the above provisions its implementation has been ineffective. Moreover, a number of states like Punjab, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh still legally permit a much higher rate of rent which varies from one-third to one-half of the gross produce.

(c) Conferment of ownership rights: In the course of the Second Plan a few states like Punjab gave optional rights to tenants to purchase the ownership rights of land cultivated by them. The next plan recommended that tenants of non-resumable areas should be brought into direct relationship with the State. Provisions have been made in some states for enabling tenants to acquire ownership rights of non-resumable lands from landlords on payment of compensation. But necessary legislation even for this limited reform is still to be enacted in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab and Tamil Nadu.<sup>21</sup>

In this regard the only state which has forged ahead is Kerala. This was possible because of an organised and strong peasant movement which was able to withstand the counter pressures of the vested interests. All rights, title and interest of the landowners and intermediaries in respect of holdings held by cultivating tenants entitled to fixity of tenure have been vested with the Government on January 1, 1970 under the provisions of the Kerala Land Reforms (Amendment) Act, 1969. But even in this state the right of ownership has not been conferred on tenants so far in a substantial number of cases.

Thus, the objective of ensuring fair rent and security of tenure still remains unattained in large parts of the country; not only do the tenancy reform legislations fall far short of the accepted policy but the implementation of already enacted laws has been half hearted, halting and unsatisfactory. The legal protection granted to tenants has been a farce.

### *Ceiling on Landholdings*

Any effective scheme of land reform must have land ceiling as one of its main programmes. Although the Congress government paid lip sympathy to the question of land ceiling, it was only during the Third Plan that some attempt was made to enact ceiling laws. Legislation in some form or the other now exists in almost all states providing for a ceiling on landholdings except in two states, Haryana and Punjab. But these laws are so full of loopholes and exemptions in favour of the big landowners that they, in collusion with the bureaucracy, have reduced ceiling legislation to a mere mockery. In anticipation of ceilings the big landholders resorted to partitioning of their holdings and fictitiously

transferring them in pieces to other individuals on a very large scale. The Task Force reports that:

As a result of the high level of ceiling, large number of exemptions from the law, malafide transfers and partitions and poor implementation the result achieved has been meagre. There are wide variations between different states with regard to the level of the ceiling, unit of application, exemptions etc.<sup>22</sup>

The class nature of the ceiling legislations becomes more patent by analysing the figures on the size of the ceiling fixed in different states, the area declared surplus and its distribution. The laws enacted by state legislatures presuppose a ceiling on existing holdings that would preserve middle landholders and rich peasants. With more than 60 per cent of the total households on average owning only upto 2 acres each and together holding as little as 7 per cent of the total land and 5 per cent of the upper groups holding 42 per cent of the land, the ceiling fixed by the principal states are as follows:<sup>23</sup>

TABLE 1  
IMPLEMENTATION OF LAND CEILING

State	Ceiling limit (in acres)	Area declared surplus (in '000 acres)	Area distributed
Andhra Pradesh	27 to 324	74	Nil
Assam	50	68	1
Bihar	20 to 60	Nil	Nil
Gujarat	19 to 132	50	25
Haryana* (Pepsu area)	27 to 100	170	65
Jammu & Kashmir	22 $\frac{3}{4}$	450	450
Karnataka	27 to 216	Nil	Nil
Kerala	6 to 20	10	1.8
Madhya Pradesh	25 to 75	84	13
Maharashtra	18 to 126	271	123
Orissa	25 to 100	Nil	Nil
Punjab* (Pepsu area)	27 to 100	178	64
Rajasthan	22 to 336	Nil	Nil
Tamil Nadu	24 to 120	25	17
Uttar Pradesh	40 to 80	241	121
West Bengal	12.4 to 17.3	694	375
Total		2315	1255.8

\* In Haryana and Punjab in the non-Pepsu areas, there was no ceiling on ownership of land.

Source: Task Force Report on Agrarian Relations, Planning Commission, Government of India, 1973.

The figures given in the table would show that most state governments set the ceilings too high and with a wide range, thus providing large built-in loopholes. For instance, Andhra Pradesh had a range from 27 to 324 acres, Rajasthan from 22 to 336 acres, Karnataka from 27 to 216 acres, Gujarat from 19 to 132 acres and Tamil Nadu from 24 to 120 acres. Obviously, with such high ceilings even if implementation was perfect, not much surplus land could have accrued to the State. It is also noteworthy that these high ceiling limits were fixed on the basis of individual holder as a unit and not on a family basis. This meant that a family of five for example, could retain in Andhra Pradesh as much as  $324 \times 5 = 1620$  acres of land and in Rajasthan 1680 acres. In some states a uniform limit irrespective of the quality of land is maintained while in others the ceiling varies with the class of land.

Over and above this high ceiling, exemptions were granted by law to a number of categories of land which seriously circumscribed the scope of the ceiling legislation. Exemptions were available for plantations, sugar-cane farms, cattle-breeding farms, orchards and groves, grazing lands, efficient farms, mechanized farms, religious and charitable institutions and trusts and co-operative farms etc. Taking advantage of these provisions the bigger landholders were successful in circumventing the ceiling laws in all parts of the country,

inevitably because the ruling class were economically and substantially related to land and could not therefore, be expected to commit class suicide. The legislative gaps that existed were wide enough to allow the ex-feudatories to "salvage" massive chunks of their estates and ensure their economic preservation, perfectly legally, by distributing them among the individual members (including the minors) of the family.<sup>24</sup>

Of course, recently some state governments have taken steps to re-draft the ceiling legislations within the framework of the national guidelines set by the Congress Working Committee. These legislations are in the various processes of enactment in the states. However, they have not so far materially affected the implementation of the ceiling on landholdings.

The extremely meagre quantity of land that has accrued to the state as a result of the enforcement of ceiling laws can be seen from the figures in the table. Out of a total cultivated area of about 400 million acres in the country as a whole only two million acres have been declared surplus. The Union Agriculture Minister has recently stated in Parliament that about 4.7 million acres of land is estimated to be declared surplus.<sup>25</sup> Presumably, this is after the application of the ceiling laws enacted under the national guidelines. Even if this figure is taken as true it is only 1.1 per cent of the total land under cultivation. This means that by sheer manouvering 99 per cent of the cultivated land now held by the landlords will remain with them and with this the Congress designed land reform will be complete.

It can be seen from the above table that Kerala and West Bengal are the two states with the lowest ceiling. It is precisely because of the fact that the left movement is strong in these two states and the peasantry is well organized to fight for a lower ceiling withstanding the counter pressures of the *jenmies*. On the other hand, in four states, Bihar, Karnataka, Orissa and Rajasthan no land has been declared surplus after the application of the ceiling laws that existed in these states for a long time. The Task Force Committee has estimated about 1.12 lakh acres of surplus land in 13 out of 19 districts in Karnataka and 1.75 lakh acres in Orissa. But the state governments have not taken steps to acquire this land.

The seriousness with which land reform is being implemented belies the meagre surplus land taken over and distributed. Out of the one million hectares land declared surplus or taken over by the government, so far only 0.5 million hectares have been distributed and the rest still remains in the hands of the landlords. Moreover, even from the land distributed a substantial portion was only to be adjusted by way of conferring ownership rights on tenants who were already holding possession of the land. In spite of several pronouncements since the First Five Year Plan about the distribution of cultivable waste land to agricultural workers and small peasants only about 5.9 million hectares out of 19 million hectares have been distributed upto last year.

Let us also look into the way in which this land is being distributed to the 47 million landless (according to official estimates which is a gross under-estimate) in the country.<sup>26</sup> In the case of Uttar Pradesh, the Task Force Committee says:

It has been observed that in large number of cases proper screening of the allottees was not done and the Government waste lands found their way to the relatives of the members of the Land Management Committees and in a number of cases to persons who have already been owning sufficient land.<sup>27</sup>

Another State government, Rajasthan is pursuing the policy of auctioning waste lands. Moreover, no amount of land distribution would succeed in rehabilitating the landless poor unless accompanied by adequate arrangements for the supply of inputs, particularly credit on easy terms for development and cultivation in the initial phases. If they are denied this necessary financial assistance, the inevitable consequence would be abandoning of land and joining the huge mass of landless poor again. The Centre and State government planners who were anxious to earmark adequate compensation to the *jenmies* for their land likely to be declared surplus in future, avoided providing any financial allocation in the national plans nor the State plans to enable these weaker sections to settle down in the land allotted to them.

Thus, it can be seen that in the course of the last twenty-seven years a plethora of land legislations has been enacted in India for effecting land reforms. In fact, nowhere in the world have land reform legisla-

tions been so voluminous as in India but nowhere else has there been so little implementation. Outlining the reasons for the bleak outlook for land reform in India, Robert Wade, writes:

The trouble was that the regimes depended heavily on the support of the very persons whose land was to be expropriated. The predictable result: a lot of talk and little action; legislation full of loopholes and inadequate implementation procedures. The conclusion is clear. Those who advocate "redistribution of assets" including land, to reduce poverty but assume the framework of a liberal democratic state, are recommending a strategy which stands little chance of being implemented in more than a token way. They, therefore, run the risk of using land by the regimes they are addressing as a symbol of concern with social justice not as a policy to be actually carried out. We will continue to hear much talk about land reform as the way to reduce inequalities and hasten progress; we would now think the prospects for action are anything but bleak.<sup>28</sup>

Even the World Bank has recently warned against 'tokenism' in land reform and urged their speedy implementation for increasing growth and reducing poverty in the developing countries. In a World Bank publication, the Bank President stressed that:

Despite the political and administrative difficulties involved governments should pursue land policies which help disperse the benefits of agricultural progress widely rather than allowing them to go to only a small segment of the population.<sup>29</sup>

The Task Force Committee had agreed with the fundamental principle that if the slogan of 'land to the tiller' is to be meaningful and honestly implemented, the land should certainly go to those who cultivate it, namely, those who perform the various operations like ploughing, sowing, transplanting, harvesting etc. Conversely, persons who do not personally participate in these operations should not be allowed to own land. However, they were sure that in the context of the social, economic and political conditions prevailing in the country such a law will not be enacted and if enacted will not be implemented.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, in our efforts to achieve the above objective it is important to remember that:

No legislation however limited, under the present ruling classes and corrupt bureaucratic set-up gets implemented, leave alone the basic solutions, unless powerful mass movements are developed.<sup>31</sup>

The experiences in Kerala and West Bengal have proved that without the active co-operation and intervention of the peasantry no land reform is possible. In fact, the most effective way of implementing land reforms is to rely primarily on non-legal and non-bureaucratic intervention of the organised movement of peasant and agricultural labourers. This has been further substantiated by the Planning Commission's finding that:

Experience shows that where the share-croppers could build some

such organisations (peasant's organisations, kisan sabhas and the like) with a modicum of militancy, they could, for sometime, resist the onslaught of the landowners.

Hence, it was strongly recommended that a certain degree of politicalisation of the poor peasantry on militant lines was necessary as a pre-requisite for any successful legislative-administrative action for conferring rights and privileges on them.<sup>9 2</sup>

Therefore, it is absolutely essential to build up a powerful mass movement of agricultural labourers and poor peasants to organise struggles for their immediate demands and to conduct a powerful campaign for real land reform. They should also seek the active support and co-operation of the working class, other organisations and the entire people to strengthen their movement. The determined struggle should be developed on the following concrete demands :

a) All intermediary tenures be abolished forthwith without paying compensation.

b) All evictions be stopped; tenants and share-croppers be recorded; and compulsory ownership rights be conferred on tenants without compensation.

c) Share-cropping tenancy be strictly controlled and regulated.

d) For a family of 5 members (including major children), depending on fertility of the soil and nature of irrigation etc., the ceiling limit be fixed between 10 to 15 acres of wet land or 20 to 30 acres dry land. Every additional member be allowed one-tenth of the ceiling, subject to a maximum holding of one and a half times the ceiling for any family.

e) All available lands, including cultivable waste lands, be distributed and ownership rights be conferred on peasants who are already under possession of such lands.

f) Distribution of the land as soon as taken over from landlords, without compensation; to agricultural labourers and poor peasants.

g) Formation of elected village committees with a fair representation of poor peasants and agricultural labourers for preparing the record of rights and for effective implementation of the agrarian legislations.

h) The above guidelines be included in the Fifth Five Year Plan and a time limit be fixed for the implementation of the above measures.

<sup>1</sup> Planning Commission, *Fifth Five Year Plan, 1974-79, A Draft Outline*, p 42.

<sup>2</sup> P D Ojha, *Configuration of Indian Poverty—Inequality and Level of Living*, in *Challenge of Poverty in India*, A J Fonseca (ed.) Vikas Publications, 1971, p 42.

<sup>3</sup> All India Kisan Sabha, *Agrarian Crisis in India and Tasks of Peasant Movement, Documents of the 22nd Conference*, 11-14 April, 1974, p 94.

<sup>4</sup> Planning Commission, *Report of the Task Force on Agrarian Relations*, 1973, p 7.

<sup>5</sup> Gregory Kotovsky, *Agrarian Reforms in India*, 1964, p 39.

<sup>6</sup> *Peasant and Labour*, August 1972.

<sup>7</sup> A Memorandum submitted to the 73rd Session of the Indian National Congress by Harsh Deo Malaviya, Convener, All India Congress Forum for Socialist

- Action, p 1.
- <sup>8</sup> Planning Commission, *First Five Year Plan*, 1951-56, pp 187-188.
- <sup>9</sup> Planning Commission, *Second Five Year Plan*, 1956-61, pp 195-196.
- <sup>10</sup> All India Congress Committee, *From Bombay to Delhi*, 1970, pp 221-222.
- <sup>11</sup> Planning Commission, *Fourth Five Year Plan*, 1969-74, A Draft Outline, p 174.
- <sup>12</sup> K Mathew Kurien, *The Struggle*, *Seminar*, April 1971, p 27.
- <sup>13</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs, Research and Policy Division, *The Causes and Nature of Current Agrarian Tension*, 1969.
- <sup>14</sup> The members of the Committee were: Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, C Subramaniam, Mohan Kumaramangalam, H R Gokhale, V P Naik, Barkatullah Khan, Dev Raj Urs, K Karunakaran, and Rajendra Kumari Bajpai.
- <sup>15</sup> All India Congress Committee, Congress Marches Ahead-VI, Minutes of the Congress Working Committee Meeting, July 22, 1972, pp 20-21.
- <sup>16</sup> Planning Commission, *op.cit.*, pp 7-11 and 25.
- <sup>17</sup> Planning Commission, *Fourth Five Year Plan*, 1969-74, p 175.
- <sup>18</sup> David Hapgood (ed.), *Report of the Conference on Productivity and Innovation in Agriculture in the Underdeveloped Countries*, Centre for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, pp 185-186.
- <sup>19</sup> Planning Commission, *op.cit.*, p 25.
- <sup>20</sup> Kalyan Dutt, Structure of Rural Economy and Inflation, *Mainstream*, June 29, 1947 p 10.
- <sup>21</sup> Planning Commission, *op.cit.*, pp 2-3.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p 4.
- <sup>23</sup> Communist Party of India, National Council Resolutions, August 1972, p 22.
- <sup>24</sup> *Statesman*, New Delhi, August 24, 1974.
- <sup>25</sup> *Lok Sabha Debates*, April 24, 1974.
- <sup>26</sup> This figure given by the Agriculture Minister in the Parliament is a gross underestimate. The number of agricultural labourers and poor peasants is much larger, *Lok Sabha Debates*, April 24, 1974.
- <sup>27</sup> Planning Commission, *op.cit.*, p 68.
- <sup>28</sup> Robert Wade, Bleak Outlook for Land Reform in India, *Motherland*, New Delhi, September 8, 1972.
- <sup>29</sup> *Indian Express*, New Delhi September 8, 1972.
- <sup>30</sup> Planning Commission, *op.cit.*, 17-18.
- <sup>31</sup> Communist Party of India (Marxist), Central Committee Resolution on *Certain Agrarian Issues* March 1973.
- <sup>32</sup> Planning Commission, *op.cit.*, p 25.

# COMMUNICATION

## *On the "Science and Technology Plan"*

IN continuation of the note by M P Parameswaran (Social Scientist, Number 17, December 1973), it is interesting to have a further look at the National Committee on Science and Technology document. NCST has raised, and correctly too, the following questions:

Are we pursuing the right scientific goals? Are we undertaking *enough* Research and Development? Are we getting the *value* for the money we spend on Science and Technology research? Is the balance between so-called 'basic' and 'applied' research about right? Are we training the *right* kind of scientists and technologists? Can we plan science? (*Italics added*).

It then opines that scientific and technological activity must be planned and directed towards the fulfilment of national goals so as to make an impact on the life in our country. If this should be the case undoubtedly the technological efforts should be dovetailed into the economic programmes of the Government. Science should be a *social* activity and the scientist and the technologist should be brought into contact with the economist and the politician, that is, if science has to have its impact on society, the society should decide the *appropriateness* of scientific efforts. The two should develop lively interaction.

Now the question arises. What are the social obligations of the Government? Unless and until these are clearly spelt out, how can science be tamed? At the outset itself NCST admits:

We cannot (also) destroy existing social relationships at such a rate as to leave a multitude of rudderless beings in an unfamiliar sea.

Of course who the "rudderless beings" are is anybody's guess. It simultaneously exhorts scientists to comprehend the role of S and T as the chief agents of contemporary social transformation. Exhorting noble ideals in generalised terms, without coming to brass-tacks probably describes the very character of the body, the NCST is today.

The committee takes pains to repeat endlessly that we are spending hardly 0.2 per cent of our Gross National Product on R and D whereas

advanced countries are spending over 2-3 per cent of their GNP for the same purpose. Accepting for a moment that this vital expenditure is far from satisfactory, what is the optimum value recommended by the committee? Here again the committee is finding it difficult to proceed. There are different "models" of development and NCST very naively says:

Every 'model' of development, implicitly or otherwise, *presumes* the applications of S and T to agriculture and industry, health and family planning and the service sectors of the economy, in whatever other respects the models may differ.

In short, NCST wants to talk of science for the society without putting forth any views on the wants of the society, any model of development or for that matter on any vital aspects of economic development.

It also notes "the wide variation of the growth rates of different industrialised countries with similar investments in R and D." Which are these countries which are thus "different"? Do these different countries have "different" models of development also? If not, why should it be different at all? In fact a supreme body like NCST should have come out openly with their opinion so as to be a guide to the political groups and the people.

NCST underscores the "technological gap" between the developed and under-developed nations, and it does not want us to do away with our efforts of "reinventing" the developed technologies. It rather warns us on the application or otherwise of technologies developed abroad to our own conditions from the point of view of capital investment, labour intensity etc, and hence cautions us to choose the right technology for import so as to avoid the situation "when technology becomes an agent of foreign domination rather than the vehicle for international development."

NCST is unhappy regarding the fund allocation for R and D work. If "there has been no explicit policy on the level and allocation of funds for S and T activity", "if the overall founding of scientific research has been decided more by the absorptive capacity of the Agencies than considerations of economic or social importance of the fields" leading thus to a "laissez faire attitude", has NCST gone into the root causes for such misdeeds of the government? After all many of the NCST members are not small men and were not so for quite some time as well? Does it show a tendency to pass on the buck or is NCST fighting shy so as not to open the cupboards lest they find many skeletons? Now comes their wrath on the bureaucrats. According to NCST the poor performance of our S and T institutions have been a lot due to their methods of decision-making being subordinate to the bureaucrat. It is wise for NCST to be warned of many scientists - turned - technocrats - turned - bureaucrats in the recent past.

So, much for the "criticism" of NCST on R and D in the country. How much further does it go? At the outset itself now it puts on record, "we do not as yet have an adequate rationale for such a complex system

(system within which policies have to be framed). Inevitably a process of trial and corrected error must be the methodology". Probably an apology to posterity for its possible failures! It evolves its strategy as follows:

1 Our five year plans have benefited mostly only the "metropolitan" population at the expense of the rural areas. This should be done away with through the fullest possible application of S and T knowledge. To some extent this has been elaborated like "the question of whether we should undertake R and D into new types of tube wells or tractors is related, apart from technical considerations, to such issues as the size of the land-holdings; the availability and the price of electricity etc." Even these elaborations are vague, thanks to the deep insight of the chairman of the NCST who was the Minister for Agriculture and is considered the father figure of the reputed "green revolution," already turning "pink" which the Home Ministry is getting afraid of!

2 On self-reliance NCST quotes the late Dr Bhabha "If the technology is regarded as the engine of the development process, then foreign technology is acceptable only as the super charger of a domestic engine and never as the engine itself". NCST wants to take maximum advantage of the present infrastructure and thus start a strong programme of *oriented* basic research. For this purpose, of course, NCST insists that the demand of the "metropolitan sector" (including rich farmers) will not be given any preference. Here comes again the crux of the evasion. What are the areas which should not be considered and what are the areas of preference based on "need" rather than "demand"?

3 Import of technology should be very carefully scrutinised. At present, apart from notably avoiding "aided" projects and minimising royalty payment, public sector is unable to bargain ostentatiously, due to the ignorance of the bureaucrats and this should be changed. So simple, change bureaucrats to technocrats! In fact how many of our technocrats are real technocrats is of course anybody's guess!

4 NCST has suggested that the institutions importing technology should be associated and coupled to R and D institutions in the field. Some such system is already operative officially speaking. Tata Iron and Steel has its own R and D unit. So also Oil and Natural Gas Commission and Steel Authority of India Limited. The Department of Defence has a large number of R and D institutes under its control with a full-fledged advisory organisation even at the stage of planning and then of execution.

This is nothing new; of course NCST is right in its observation that these R and D institutions have not made any significant impact on the development of new technologies or even the absorption of the presently available technologies. The most glaring fact is that the industry sector private and public with a turnover of over Rs 5000 crores has been spending only a meagre Rs 15 crores on their so-called R and D which is mostly only quality control and testing. This is undoubtedly a matter of

"serious concern". NCST suggests an R and D cess to be levied on all industrial units on a graded basis, this amount to be deposited and disbursements made from a central "Industrial R and D Cess Fund", for projects approved by NCST. Though easily said, it is very doubtful whether this approach will provide any useful results especially under the present set up.

The most important chapter of the NCST plan, namely, the areas of prime importance, also offers poor reading matter in the sense that NCST has chosen to dwell upon everything rather than fixing priorities. It is certainly good to know that we have to improve in health and hygiene, energy sources, mining and minerals, heavy chemicals, atomic energy, coal, metals etc. But are there any particular areas where we can really do well within the funds available, based on our own raw materials and the present infrastructure, technological-administrative-political? There was an explosion in electronics in Japan during the 1950's and the Japanese are catching up in other fields as well. Do we have any similar plans? Should we base our strategy on coal and water for our power problems rather than on exotic nuclear reactors and the very meagre resources of oil? Should oil be conserved for other sectors? Should railways be dieselised at all or continue to be based on coal? Is there scope for small scale industries? How is the employment going to be related with the industrial progress? In fact, should not industry be dovetailed to the employment needs and not vice versa? If NCST is vague on these vital matters, the detailed reports of NCST also corroborate this.

Take the case of the draft plan of the NCST group on education and scientific research. As per the document, the important objectives in educational planning are (1) providing skilled man-power for the S and T plan, (2) providing employment for surplus scientists and engineers, (3) to make structural changes for making education more purposeful, (4) to provide high quality science education to a larger body particularly in rural areas, (5) to provide science base at all levels of society, (6) to improve Training and Research facilities, (7) to avoid mismatch between training and employment and (8) to create a dynamic and progressive educational system.

To meet the above the following are certain suggestions: At the school level,

- 1 For improving teaching, training programme, text books and curricula, scientists from Universities and R and D institutions should be associated. NCERT should prepare a large number of "core" books and these "core" books should be translated into different Indian languages.

- 2 Science should be compulsory and atleast 20 per cent students given work experience and vocational training.

- 3 Educational level of teachers should be raised.

- 4 At least one centrally administered pace-setting community school be set up in every district at a total cost of Rs.60 crores.

### 5 Science camps and projects should be encouraged.

It is rather strange to believe that the whole school education can be revamped by a mere increase in funds to the tune of Rs 125 crores (in 5 years) for the whole country, apart from of course what is being spent now, even though we are now already spending 3-3.5 per cent of GNP on education of which 45-50 per cent is on primary and secondary education itself. Is the reason for the malady just shortage of such *marginal* funds, or is it deeper? As expected NCST has again gone into only the peripheral aspects of making education purposeful. What has NCST to say about the colossal neglect of the school-teacher? How and why is it that the teacher profession has become the refuge of the underqualified? (leaving alone a few privileged and elitist institutions). Has education lost its sanctity in the eyes of an average individual? Why has education become "purposeless" in his eyes?

A more basic difficulty, what about the medium of instruction? Is NCST shy of giving its views on this vital matter? How are the centrally administered community schools going to work? Will they be on the pattern of the present central schools with only Hindi and English as the media? Or will it conduct examinations in all the national languages?—a sort of miniature Union Public Service Commission. In fact the whole purpose of the NCST document is only to ask for the creation of a few more *central* institutions which will turn out some more elitist students. NCST wants an additional expenditure of Rs 250 crores for other educational activities including general R and D. Already a stage has reached when collegiate and other educational amenities can be met only by the middle and upper classes. It is only typical that NCST typifies their class interest.

Let us now take another major NCST document, the one on "Mining, Steel and Metallurgical Industry". Here also the preamble states that "the plan is intended to bring science to the common people so that they enjoy the benefits." According to NCST the whole R and D expenditure for mining and metallurgy is at present only Rs four to five crores, which is highly inadequate. The guidelines for the future are,

- 1) R and D needs of the industry in existence and also those projected in the five year plan.
- 2) Exploitation of mineral resources
- 3) Development of knowhow
- 4) Self-reliance in strategic areas
- 5) Increased productivity from R and D
- 6) R and D projects which can be exploited during the five year plans.

It estimates that from an R and D investment of Rs 88 crores, we will generate wealth atleast ten fold. It may be mentioned in this connection that the final report is the one prepared by a core committee after full examination of the various task forces reports. Let us consider some of

the recommendations:

1) Now that a SAIL has been formed NCST feels that it is better "to leave details of project selection and management to SAIL". NCST expects that SAIL will spend upto one per cent of its gross turnover for R and D. Paradoxically this works out to only Rs 10 crores whereas SAIL is now already spending Rs 6 crores. It is naive to believe that the small increase is going to contribute significantly to the improvement of steel production in our country !

2) On ores and minerals the committee recommends allotment of Rs 5.85 crores for R and D work at National Meteorological Laboratory, Regional Research Laboratory (Bhubaneswar) and Bhabha Atomic Research Centre. No mention is made as to what are the minerals required to be worked on priority or anything of that sort.

3) The proposal of "Formed Coke Committee" to make low phosphorus formed coke for the ferro alloy industry at Talchar has been strongly supported by NCST. The emphasis is right in the sense that this is an attempt to make use of our vast resources of non-coking coal. The pilot project costs Rs four crores.

4) The committee has distinguished between the "major thrust projects" and projects with normal priority for all sectors. This is to be welcomed, at least as a starting point.

A careful look at the overall budget proposals for 15 items under review brings out the following deficiencies:

1 There has not been any assessment of the performance of R and D institutes vis-a-vis industry so far. This is particularly disappointing even for the so-called 'in-house' technology transfer chains, say, Tata Iron & Steel and its R and D wing, SAIL and its R and D wing and so on. This is a very serious omission because the proposals of these institutions should have been assessed on their past performance. Such an exercise would have also brought out the *practical problems* of even 'in-house' technology transfer processes.

2 There is a feeling that correct priorities have not yet been arrived at. Thus whereas the whole steel industry including iron and steel, special steels, refractories, ferro alloys and mining shares only Rs 40 crores out of the total Rs 71 crores, a very minor item consisting of the rare and high purity metals takes a share of Rs 13.4 crores.

3 In fixing and allotting funds for the different heads, it would have been better to divide it into two namely,

a) R and D aimed at indigenising and improving existing technologies,

b) R and D aimed at future programmes.

Priorities could have been fixed better once this exercise was gone into.

Let us examine a third NCST document, namely, its report on nutrition. The report brings out the fact that a distressingly large propor-

tion of our population lives well below the "poverty line"; the worst sufferers being children (constituting 15 per cent of the population) and women in the reproductive period. The proportional mortality rate among our preschool children is 40 per cent compared to 7 per cent in advanced countries. 17 per cent of preschool children suffer from Grade III malnutrition, 40 per cent from Grade II and 10-25 per cent from Grade I. Over a million cases of blindness arise from vitamin A deficiency. An equal number die from malnutrition, leave alone the many deaths due to causes like measles, gastroenteritis, whooping cough, small-pox, chickenpox etc. which would not have been fatal given a proper nutritious diet. The document has brought out well the long time ill-effects of malnutrition for national development by way of reduced growth of the human body, reduced intellectual potential, expenditure by way of medicines, hospital beds etc. to treat malnourished children, the loss of manhours of parents, the cost of going through various stages like pregnancy, child-birth, cost of food and clothing etc., until the death of the child. The loss to the nation may run into several crores of rupees. Thus the paramount responsibility of the government is to tackle this problem wholeheartedly.

Some of the major approaches suggested by the NCST panel are the following:

- 1 Mere increase in food production in the presence of economic constraints cannot wipe out pockets of severe malnutrition. Socio-economic inequalities should be removed.

- 2 High yielding cereals should be high in nutritive contents also.

- 3 Nearly 70 per cent of the food grains produced in the country are stored in villages where they are cultivated. Satisfactory storage procedures should be evolved.

- 4 Rural communities should be educated to effectively utilise the foods which are locally available and which are within their reach. This is particularly important for the children feeding programme.

- 5 Iron fortification of food must receive priority.

- 6 The synergism between nutrition and infection being well-established, the feeding programme should be integrated with other health activities, in the form of package schemes. Health agencies should be brought into the nutrition schemes.

- 7 A majority of children are in a state of chronic starvation and what we are dealing with is more a "food gap" than a "protein gap". The immediate need is therefore for food.

- 8 A national Nutrition Commission should be set up with executive powers for all nutrition programmes now being undertaken by the Departments of Food, Social Welfare, Community Development, Health and Education. The panel has requested an allotment Rs 500 crores for nutrition programme during the Fifth Five Year Plan.

The panel has undoubtedly brought out many priority issues regarding this vital sector of the society. The emphases are also very

relevant. The following, however, seems lacking:

1 What have been the major deficiencies of the previous programmes, as far as implementation is concerned.

2 Is it that the major cause for failure of past programme has been faulty policies or the absence of proper machinery.

3 If it is due to the fault of the machinery, how can it be improved?

4 For a country of our size and also the considerable variations in food habits, cereal availability and such allied factors, is it proper at all to centralise the activities into a commission. Is it not better to tackle it only at the states level?

5 Each Department clamouring for the personal patronage of the Prime Minister or the respective Chief Minister, how is this different from the usual? Would it not have been better to ask for a separate full time Cabinet Minister to handle this vital department?

A brief critique of the three typical documents show to what extent NCST has failed to come out with a priority-cum-implementation oriented plan with a view to "bringing relief to the common man". In fact the detailed reports are no more concrete than the approach document, further substantiated by the detailed allocation of funds as shown in Table 1.

One of the most devastating effects which has resulted from the policies adopted so far has been the progressive alienation of the intelligentsia from the bulk of the society. It was well-known, and widely criticised by the leaders of our Freedom Movement, that the primary aim of the British Raj in imparting education to the natives was to make sure of an adequate supply of clerks and administrators for the ruling machinery and artisans and glorified supervisory cadre for the foreign owned industrial enterprises. The few native industrial units more or less aped their foreign counterparts. After independence this educational policy was undoubtedly given wider priorities, but the essential framework remained the same—namely education was not linked up with any organised approach towards development of S and T which in turn should have depended on a definite pattern of industrial development. Education, in real terms, became a victim of the notorious 'market value.' Depending on the vagaries of the market, professional courses, one or another, got priority or importance. Gaps developed, and progressively increased, between all successive stages of the S and T innovative chain between educational institutions and research establishments, the latter and industry and so on. Our educational institutions now do not have any significant involvement in national efforts at modernisation or eradication of poverty or uplifting of the masses. A whole class of people, whom we have created through the present national endeavours, at the cost of the rudimentary welfare of millions of the rural and urban poor, this same class is so much alienated from the poor and the backward and is

TABLE 1

## FIFTH PLAN OUTLAYS ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

(Rs crores)

Name of Department	Plan outlay	Non- plan estimate	Total Amo- unt	Per cent
1 Council of Scientific and Industrial Research	104.50	150.30	254.80	16.2
2 Atomic Energy .. ..	111.13	125.30	236.43	15.1
3 Science and Technology .. ..	109.98	75.00	184.98	11.8
4 Food and Agriculture .. ..	125.00	57.00	182.00	11.6
5 Space .. ..	90.00	82.50	172.50	11.6
6 Heavy Industries .. ..	70.00	—	70.00	4.4
7 Mines .. ..	69.00	—	69.00	4.4
8 Education and Social Welfare— UGC and IITs	54.00	—	54.00	3.4
9 Railways .. ..	—	40.00	40.00	2.6
10 Irrigation .. ..	38.00	(a)	38.00	2.4
11 Communication .. ..	32.28	(a)	32.28	2.1
12 Meteorology (and institutes)	30.00	(a)	30.00	1.9
13 Industrial Development	25.00	—	25.00	1.6
14 Works and Housing .. ..	23.75	—	23.75	1.5
15 Health .. ..	21.70	(a)	21.70	1.4
16 Steel .. ..	20.00	—	20.00	1.3
17 Electronics .. ..	20.00	—	20.00	1.3
18 Petroleum .. ..	16.00	—	16.00	1.0
19 Power .. ..	15.00	—	15.00	1.0
20 Chemicals .. ..	15.00	—	15.00	1.0
21 Family Planning .. ..	14.30	(a)	14.30	0.9
22 Shipping .. ..	10.00	—	10.00	0.6
23 Transport .. ..	9.00	—	9.00	0.6
24 Others .. ..	9.65	4.83	14.48	0.4
		(a)		
		(a)		
Total	1,033.29	534.93	1568.22	100.00

(a) Does not include non-plan outlays of research, design and development institutions in the departments

Source: Planning Commission, *Draft Outline of the Fifth Five Year Plan*, 1973.

progressively becoming part and parcel of the ruling establishment.

For historical reasons and otherwise this group has been essentially oriented towards the West. S and T cannot progress in India in the way in which it did in a country like the United Kingdom, more than anything else because the capital required could be made available in UK from the exploitation of the colonies which is not possible in India. Having known this it is not surprising that the native capitalists have lost their faith in a local S and T plan. The new slogan called "leap-frogging" is virtually an idea promoted by the foreign and native capitalists to justify collaboration and thus do away with their dependance on the native S and T in their efforts of capitalistic exploitation.

The attitude of the industry towards S and T being as given above, how does it consider other areas? The so-called "high technologies" have been given very high priority and this includes atomic energy, electronics space and defense. These four departments consume 40 per cent of our R and D efforts, all from public sector funds! Why is it that NCST is oblivious of such serious draw backs in S and T planning? If the aim of S and T should be to "bring relief to the poor" why has NCST allowed these departments to get away with such a big share without even a qualm? Does it not show a callous indifference to mismanagement of public funds or is NCST compromising with the aspirations of the native bourgeoisie to fly high at the cost of misery and malnutrition engulfing the millions? Or possibly is it not a typical semi-fascist, reactionary attitude of life from the present ruling establishment?

In short the NCST document is as hollow and eventually as damaging as the Five Year Plan document. It hardly brings out any positive steps to improve the state of S and T in our country. Rather it will serve only as another sham policy document of the Government.

A D

## NOTE

### *Wage Share and Wage Freeze in Organised Manufacturing Sector*

THE recently promulgated ordinance on wages and salaries on July 6th, as an anti-inflationary measure appears unreasonable (though true to the class character of the ruling polity) when viewed against what really has been happening to the share of labour and its real earnings, in the organised manufacturing sector in India.

This ordinance comes in the wake of the much talked of wage-price spiral which had led, especially since the last year and a half to hectic activity and heated discussions in the official circles, on the need for evolving a suitable national wage policy. Only such a bold attack on the wage front it was thought would save the country from this vicious inflationary spiral which is gripping the economy with an ever increasing force. On several occasions the Prime Minister, the Finance and Labour Ministers spoke on this issue, both inside and outside the Parliament and an expert Committee of the Planning Commission, the Chakravarty Committee, was constituted which submitted its interm report last year on a national wage policy. The Union Labour Minister has as yet stubbornly refused to share this report with the public. Of course it was realised that a wages and incomes policy should be integrated with a rational price policy but it was admitted that, "The Government was not as yet thinking in terms of a general price freeze as it meant going into each item by item and it would lead to goods disappearing and therefore cause greater hardship on the people"<sup>1</sup> (!)

The final outcome of all this action was the Additional Emoluments (Compulsory Deposit) Ordinance. The ordinance refers to all employees in the organised industrial sector,<sup>2</sup> both public and private, and all Central and State Government employees; we are concerned here with the industrial workers alone. These relate to all workers in all industrial establishments employing (a) 10-49 workers with power and 50-99 workers without power, the 'small' units and (b) 50 or more workers with power and 100 or more workers without power, the 'large' units. These two comprise the organised industrial sector, statistics on which are compiled by the Annual Survey of Industries and the Labour Bureau.<sup>3</sup>

Under the Ordinance cash payments of further increases in dear-

ness allowance<sup>4</sup> from April 1, 1974 to wage and salary earners would be limited to 50 per cent and the balance will be credited to their Provident Fund for a period of two years. Also increases in wages and salaries on account of wage revisions would be similarly impounded for a period of one year in a special account. The additional wages and salaries to be thus compulsorily deposited will include increases by way of bonus etc., but not regular increments.

This ordinance is reminiscent of the year 1948 when in a similar situation of growing Government "alarm" at price inflation, the ruling party had resorted to a similar policy measure, issuing a statement in October on "Measures to Combat Inflation," that a Labour Appellate Tribunal would be established "to ensure that uniform principles (of wage settlement) will be adopted under the overall control of the Central Government." This in practice meant a virtual freeze on wages since the Government wanted to restrict any upward movement of the wages which would upset the "stability" of industry. This has been the underlying strategy of Government wage policy since then and was formalised in the First Five Year Plan document. When the criteria for a wage policy were outlined in the First Five Year Plan it was clearly stated that wage increases should be as low as possible and should be granted mainly to remove anomalies in the existing wage structure. This it was claimed was necessary to maximise the surplus available for capital accumulation and hence for expansion of employment.

The accent of policy must be on keeping the increase in money incomes as low as possible. A programme of full employment at rising real wages can get into swing only as capital formation in the country goes up.<sup>5</sup>

Succeeding plans added little to this, but this relative lack of articulation on wage policy should not be taken as indicative of the absence of one, which impression it has been attempted to create. "How ambiguous Indian official statements can be on policy where the issue is a politically sensitive one is well known."

It is interesting to note that many of the criteria to be followed in the future were formalised in the 1951 judgement for settlement of labour matters of the Labour Appellate Tribunal on the dispute between Buckingham and Carnatic Mills and its workers.<sup>6</sup> The main features of this judgement were that the upper limit of wages is set not by the capacity of an individual establishment to pay but by the capacity of the industry-cum-region to pay such a wage. This provision introduced a lot of arbitrariness in the laying down of a minimum wage<sup>7</sup>. Although a great deal of organised struggle of the workers has been for a "need based minimum wage," most of the wage fixations have in fact been restricted by considerations of the capacity of the industry to pay. Furthermore the 1951 judgement did not provide for complete compensation for rises in the cost of living and compensation was set at a flat rate. These basic principles were then

accepted in the judgements of subsequent tribunals. Since the Second Plan there were certain changes in the legal machinery to deal with the struggles of the working class—the Labour Appellate Tribunal was replaced in 1956 by a system of tripartite wage boards comprising of an equal number of representatives of employers, and workers with an independent Chairman supported by an economist and a consumers' representative. Though this arrangement appeared to be more flexible than the former Labour Appellate Tribunal it is clear from the way these wage boards functioned that as a rule they have been very conservative in their recommendations. Not merely that, a study on the working of the Wage Boards shows that in most of the industries reviewed, after the implementation of the Wage Board recommendation, wage costs as a proportion of total costs were actually lower! Also profit rates in four main industries studied were not generally lower in a post implementation period as compared with a pre-implementation period.<sup>8</sup> This is very significant and brings out the fact that in the settlement of workers' demands,

Whenever the wage increases depended upon a decision by statutory authority, Government's cautious approach in constituting such authority may be said to have operated against the workers. The nature of the judicial machinery for wage fixing with its scope for appeals to higher seats of justice has introduced an element of procedural delays to the disadvantage of labour.<sup>9</sup>

Now, a characteristic of the Indian wage structure is that the worker's wage is made up of a basic wage, dearness allowance and a bonus; the most important being the first two. For each of these items, the workers must bargain separately or go to adjudication. The dearness allowance is a substantial portion of the gross wage and with variations among states forms about one-third of total earnings.

TABLE I  
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF PER CAPITA ANNUAL EARNINGS OF  
EMPLOYEES EARNING LESS THAN RS. 400 PER MONTH IN  
MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES BY COMPONENTS

	Gross Wage	Basic Wage	Cash Allowance	Bonus
1963	100	64.20	30.20	4.60
1964	100	63.34	32.60	3.21
1965	100	61.60	33.60	3.90
1966	100	60.90	34.13	4.05
1967	100	57.22	37.19	4.13
1968	100	—	—	—
1969	100	55.56	39.34	4.28

Source: *Indian Labour Year Book* 1965 to 1970.

A very interesting fact which emerges from the table is that the most significant source of change in wages has been the change in dearness

allowance which has been steadily rising during this period while basic wage as a proportion of total gross wage has declined from 64 to 56 per cent. But the method of compensating for price rise based on the 1951 judgement which discourages complete neutralisation, introduced a built-in check on the rise in wages due to a rise in prices. No doubt both money wages and prices have been rising in the past; prices have moved up and wages have tried very unsuccessfully to catch up with prices. This can be seen also from Table 2.

TABLE 2

1961=100			
	All India Consumer Price Index	Index Number of Money Earnings	Index Number of Real Earnings
1962	103	106	103
1963	106	109	103
1964	121	114	94
1965	132	128	97
1966	146	139	95
1967	166	151	91
1968	171	160	94
1969	169	171	101

Source: *Indian Labour Statistics*, 1972.

The average real wage per worker has hardly risen over the whole period as the price index shows a very sharp increase during this period. At the same time value added per employee, that is total value of output minus the total value of input including depreciation per employee has been growing rapidly in the organised manufacturing sector and has far outstripped the growth of wages per worker in the period 1960-65.

TABLE 3

1961=100	
	Index of Value Added per Employee (at constant prices)
1962	100.6
1963	103.2
1964	107.9
1965	109.0
1966	109.4
1967	111.2
1968	113.0
1969	134.1

Source: Compiled from the *Annual Survey of Industries* 1961 to 1969.

Value added per worker is taken as a rough measure of producti-

vity in the limited sense that a rise in this index measures a reduction in the unit cost of production, that is, an increase in productivity, since the conceptual as well as empirical difficulties in measuring labour productivity are well known. A point to note is that during the Second Plan period, though the basic wage policy underwent no significant change there was a shift in emphasis towards productivity—that wages should be linked to productivity. Contrary to the prevailing notion that the industrial workers have been claiming wage increases indiscriminately without due regard to a corresponding rise in productivity, Table 3 shows that value added per employee went up by 34 percent during 1960-69 at constant prices. The average real earnings as we have seen rose only marginally:

As a matter of fact enough evidence is now available which shows that wages as a proportion of total costs of production or of value of production has been falling during the period 1960 to 1970. A Reserve Bank of India study on 1501 large and medium public limited companies shows that wage cost as a percentage of the value of production has gone down from 15.1 per cent in 1965-66 to 14.5 per cent in 1969-70. At the same time raw material costs, and components cost has gone up from 57.2 to 57.9 per cent during the same period. The study also indicates that the period between 1965 and 1970 was one of rising manufacturing costs mainly on account of the rise in "raw materials and components" but the large manufacturing companies have been able to shift the increase in their costs and were able to *improve* their profits. Average profit rate was as high as 11.5 per cent in 1970-71.<sup>10</sup> The National Commission on Labour similarly points out that "wage costs as a proportion of total costs of manufacture have registered a decline and the general impression that wage costs as a proportion of total costs is rising is unfounded."<sup>11</sup> That the share of labour too, defined as the percentage of wages to value added, as also of wages and salaries has been declining during this time has been pointed out by many economists<sup>12</sup> including the officials in New Delhi.<sup>13</sup> The Annual Survey of Industries data shows that compared to 1960, wages and salaries as a percent of value added have declined from 55.7 per cent to 53.3 percent in 1969. The notion that increasing wages have acted as a push on the cost of production and therefore on prices is not borne out by facts. Wherever wages have risen, it has been a consequence of a rise in prices rather than a cause of inflation; prices have moved due to causes unrelated to wages.

Not only has Government wage policy restrained the upward movement of wages, but its wider social and economic policies have led to several contradictions and imbalances in the economy which have been largely responsible for the present inflationary situation. The growth and industrialisation of the Indian economy was promoted in a planning framework, the underlying strategy of which has been the building up of an investment goods sector which would eventually break the capital goods restraint and generate self-sustaining growth; demand for essential consumer goods

would be met by household industries and factory production in so far as it was not competitive with the former. Though the Government was to play a decisive role in the saving and investment decisions taken in the economy, in fact a large segment of investment and production decisions were left in the hands of private manufacturers and traders. In an economy where there were extreme inequalities of income to start with, the whole process of industrialisation since planning started has generated "forces both from the side of supply and demand which enforce each other and promote patterns of industrial development primarily oriented to the needs and preferences of the higher income group."<sup>14</sup> The state too has been playing a helping role by investing in steel, non-ferrous metals, heavy chemicals and heavy machine industries, a large proportion of the output of which is finding its way into the luxury goods sector. At the same time a policy of low prices followed by these industries has been defended on the grounds of fostering the process of industrialisation and "the product pattern of public sector enterprises has shown tendencies from time to time to get adjusted to the pattern of demand from the higher income groups and the industries catering to them."<sup>15</sup> The industrial structure which has developed has a small capital goods base "in which sphere too not much progress has taken place after the 1956-65 impetus, household enterprises have been unable to expand rapidly enough and factory production in consumer goods industries has been rising fastest in the case of non-essentials and luxury goods."<sup>16</sup> Since the requirements in capital and modern technology tend to increase rapidly (in the sector catering to the rich minority), consequently creation of new jobs per unit of investment declines."<sup>17</sup>

This observed tendency in India has tended to benefit the private manufacturers, changing the distribution of income in favour of these groups. Though inequalities in incomes have been rising, the rate of saving has continued to remain at a very low level and the hope cherished in the First Five Year Plan and subsequently that the upward movement of wages should be restricted in order to generate savings and capital accumulation has been completely belied.

The ordinance offers no solution to the problem of inflation. The Government again claims that these measures do not constitute a wage freeze but the fact remains that in practice this amounts to a large reduction in the compensation paid to the employees for a rapidly increasing erosion of their real wages. The prospect of any wage revision either through collective bargaining or through other mechanisms of wage determination such as wage boards or adjudication is also uncertain. This is already evident in the case of several industries where wage revisions were overdue and processes were under way for fresh settlements. The bipartite agreement in the coal industry is not being finalised. The Electricity Wage Guidelines Committee is immobilised and negotiations on the fresh charter of demands in iron and steel industry are stalled with the existing agreement about to expire. The work of the bipartite

Wage Committee for cement and sugar has also been suspended.

MRIDUL EAPEN

- <sup>1</sup> Statement made by a Finance Ministry spokesman on the day the ordinance was announced.
- <sup>2</sup> Industrial employees comprise of *workers* who earn *wages* as defined in the 1948 Factories Act—a person employed for wages or not in any manufacturing process, in or cleaning any part of the machinery or premises used for a manufacturing process, or any other kind of work incidental to or connected with the manufacturing process; and *other than workers* who earn *salaries*.
- <sup>3</sup> The Survey started in 1959 replaced the Census of Manufacturing Industries and is a comprehensive enumeration of factory statistics covering large and small units in 63 industry groups, the former on a Census basis and the latter on a probability sampling basis. The Labour Bureau, Department of Labour and Employment publishes annually, statistics on employment, wages and earnings, levels of living etc. relating to factories covering both small and big units. The coverage of the two is almost the same.
- <sup>4</sup> Payment of dearness allowance is a method of “neutralising” increases in the cost of living started in 1940 in the form of a grain compensation in the public sector and the cotton textile industry, which with labour’s demand for it in other industries spread throughout the country.
- <sup>5</sup> *First Five Year Plan—A Summary*, Planning Commission, Government of India, 1953.
- <sup>6</sup> The review of wage policy and legislation given is from KV Iyer, Review of Wages Policy in Indian Plans in *Wage Policy and Wage Determination in India* (ed) J C Sandesara and L K Deshpande; D A S Jackson, Wage Policy and Industrial Relations in India, *Economic Journal*, March 1972.
- <sup>7</sup> In 1948 the Minimum Wage Act was enacted which empowered State Governments to fix a wide variety of minimum wages, the Committee on Fair Wages recommending that these be set on an industry-cum-region basis. The ineffectiveness of the Act can be judged by the fact that the level of minimum daily wage had been generally fixed at Rs. 1.3 by 1953 and by 1970, the levels prevailing were only about Rs 1.9. Also the interval between the setting of a minimum and its revision appears to have been very long, on average about 9 years!
- <sup>8</sup> J C Sandesara, The Central Wage Boards—A Study of the Impact of their Recommendations and their Functioning, in Sandesara and Deshpande *op.cit.*
- <sup>9</sup> B N Datar, *Labour Economics*, Allied Publishers, Bombay 1968.
- <sup>10</sup> *Reserve Bank of India Bulletin*, July 1972.
- <sup>11</sup> *Report of the National Commission of Labour* 1969.
- <sup>12</sup> S A Palekar, Real Wages and Profits in India: 1939-1950, *Indian Economic Review* August 1957; R Narayanan and B Roy, Movement of Distributive Shares in India 1948-49 to 1957-58 and K Mukerjee, Wages in Large Scale Industries and National Income, Papers presented at the Third Indian Conference on *Research in National Income* Bombay 1961; S L Shetty, Share of Wages and Profits in the Private Corporate Sector, *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 3, 1973; M M Dadi, Income Share of Factory Labour in India, Shri Ram Centre for Industrial Relations New Delhi, 1973. published in the *Journal of Development Planning*, United Nations.
- <sup>13</sup> National Commission on Labour, *op.cit.*
- <sup>14</sup> K N Raj, Linkages in Industrialisation, to be published in the *Journal of Development Planning*, United Nations.
- <sup>15</sup> Raj *op.cit.*
- <sup>16</sup> Raj *op.cit.*
- <sup>17</sup> Celso Furtado, The Brazilian Model, *Social and Economic Studies*, March 1973.

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Review Article*

### *Galbraith Sees the Future in China*

John Kenneth Galbraith, *A CHINA PASSAGE*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd New Delhi, 1973, pp. 143.

ONE of the very disturbing consequences of the unending quarrel between Peking and Moscow is the flood of anti-socialist literature issuing forth from these great metropolises of world socialism. A casual look at one's shelf of recent books from Moscow impresses one with dozens after dozens of titles devoted to People's Republic of China. Look at some of them:

Mao's Pseudo-Socialism by V Gelbras  
China—Cultural Revolution or Counter Revolution by  
Wang Ming  
Chinese Crisis: Causes and Character by  
Liparit Kyuzajhyan  
Whither China, by Fyodor Dimitriev  
Territorial Claims of Mao Tse Tung by  
A Kruchinin and V Olgin  
Socialism Theory and Practice  
1973 November Supplement devoted to China  
A Critique of Mao Tse Tung's Theoretical Conceptions by  
F V Constantinov and others.

There are besides these, hundreds and thousands of articles in every popular periodical and learned journal deriding and denouncing China by Soviet writers; in addition the daily broadcasts blare across the length and breadth of the globe in all possible tongues to reach all possible climes.

If all these were devoted to polemics on theoretical, ideological and policy questions we may not take exception to them. Besides the most vitriolic denunciation of ideological positions they contain blatant denials of the undisputed economic and social achievements of the Chinese Revolution. The Soviet publicists who find it hard to spare half a dozen words

to record the unemployment, starvation deaths, epidemics and growing illiteracy in a capitalist-landlord India, grow eloquent in describing with unconcealed delight the slowdowns and breakdowns of the Chinese economy, most of them imagined and the rest plagiarised from the imperialist press.

Read this gem for example:

This rationing system provided a hungry existence for hundreds of millions of Chinese. Millions of people had to pay with their lives for the reckless decisions of Mao Tse-tung. Numerous data which leaked through the thick bamboo screen, disclosed that in 1961-62 there was a dropsy patient practically in every family and many died of hunger. Altogether more than 25 million people died of hunger in China during that period.<sup>1</sup>

Does not this have a familiar ring? The writer Dimitriev certainly has borrowed a leaf or two from the notorious anti-Soviet propagandists of the twenties and thirties who conjured up visions of millions upon millions dying of famine in Soviet Union. Dimitriev, an adept in *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi* forgets to tell us that most of the difficulties China faced during this period of "Great Leap" and immediately afterwards was due to the unilateral and unexpected withdrawal of Soviet technicians and assistance, treacherously timed to coincide with unprecedented drought conditions in China. Of course, Nikita Khrushchev wanted such things to happen and thus to break China to submission. Even Palmiro Togliatti of Italy, a strong supporter of Moscow's switch over to revisionism condemned in no uncertain terms this treacherous withdrawal of not only technicians and aid, but even copies of blue prints and half-built plants.<sup>2</sup> But in spite of Khrushchev's fond desire and what this Soviet publicist would have us believe has happened, China survived this treachery with glory and the fable of millions of deaths is but a scandalous canard.

Another writer goes on to quote figures from nowhere to prove that the wages of the Chinese workers are progressively declining.<sup>3</sup> He also waxes eloquent *à la* a Very Reverend Alexander Sholzenitsyn on the suppression of culture, science and dissent in China.<sup>4</sup>

Examples could be multiplied. But this is only one side of the picture. The Soviet leaders and publishers can plead an extenuating circumstance, that Chinese publicists are paying them back in the same coin. When Soviet writers condemn China and Chinese leaders as militarist, Bonapartist, anarchist, Blanquist, Trotskyite, Confucian (sic!) and what not<sup>5</sup> Chinese allege that Soviet Union has relapsed into capitalism, and is "social imperialist" (whatever it may mean!) and is to be considered an enemy of the people of the world on par with American imperialism. Well, though we may still debate on who had the head start in this not-so-salubrious game of anti-socialist scandal-mongering and name-calling, there is no need for any debate as to who heads the race now.

In the circumstances those who refuse to write off big countries out of the Socialist system and still wish to learn from and propagate the successes and glories of socialist countries are in an unenviable plight. The socialist capitals have taken over from imperialists and bourgeoisie the task of deriding and denigrating the socialist countries. Often we are constrained to look to other sources for our diligent reading and discriminate acceptance. And in the bookshops are plenty of books on China—there is almost a boom in the market for China books. But how to pick and choose from such a flood of books?

Certainly one cannot miss the China book by that indefatigable writer of best sellers, John Kenneth Galbraith.<sup>6</sup> On his credit side we must concede that Professor Galbraith has given an unassuming name for his book, *A China Passage*, so that we may be warned beforehand. Still, the author being Galbraith and subject China and the price though not the size being rather impressive, we may be misled. To our dismay we discover that the book is more about the Professor and less about China. Though adorned with paper maps, a few nice photographs and an index, of the 142 + XVI pages in the book only some 20 pages are actually devoted to anything serious about the People's Republic of China. The remaining pages contain a rather light-hearted diary of a sojourn conducted by Galbraith and his famous economist companions James Tobin of Yale and Nobel Laureate Wassily Leontief of Harvard. Within the space we are also treated to Galbraith's campaigning for McGovern in USA, and his efforts to get to China through the good offices of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto by humouring him.

Although the diary begins on 4th September 1972 and closes on 25th September, the Galbraith team was actually in China only from 8th to 22nd September. He spent the final two days in Paris on his way home, when he wrote down his assessment of China. But if we winnow thoroughly, in the previous sections we may separate some grain from the mass of chaff. The Americans' visit to Shanghai is one such. There they visited a permanent industrial exhibition and recorded:

The exhibition, for which we had informed and highly intelligent women guides, establishes to my satisfaction that there is nothing much that China does not make. In the great main hall, Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin at one end, Chairman Mao between the unfurled red flags at the other, we saw a turbogenerator, 300,000-Kw inner water-cooled, stator and rotor model; five-colour rotary gravure press (Model 5-S WJ-801); an industrial digital computer, also called *Calculateur Numerique*, Industrial Model TQ-3; a 12,000-ton hydraulic free-forging press; a Laser Dynamic Balancing machine. There was much more but at this point the products became a bit technical and I did not always grasp their purpose.<sup>7</sup>

These facts and Chinese prowess in the field of advanced industrial production and manufacture of sophisticated machinery and gadgets are

now universally recognized with the possible exception of certain Soviet publicists. But this is not the special significance of Chinese achievement. There are a few other newly-independent nations which too have made remarkable progress in this field, though not to the extent China has. Take the example of India. We too have gone ahead with a measure of industrialisation, however halting and inadequate it may be from the point of view of our requirements. But this is capitalist industrialisation with all its classical accompaniments of unplanned destruction and painful death of traditional and small-scale industries and handicrafts. This process of relentless capitalist road has led to widespread unemployment of fearful proportions, uneven development leading to de-industrialisation in the once-prosperous seats of traditional economic activity, mass exodus to the new urban centres, converting large parts of them into overpopulated slums infested with malnutrition, epidemics, illiteracy and unemployment. Our rulers put the blame of all these on the procreating activities of human beings, and human resources considered as the wealth of nations in socialist planning are cursed here as a bane and liability. It is here that the Chinese development differs from the capitalist road of other developing nations.

Though one may have reservations on the terminologies and style adopted by Galbraith, his findings and analysis are worth quoting.

Explaining in detail how hardworking and diligent are the workers under people's regime, Galbraith says:

Work has a second dimension which is opportunity; it doesn't matter how willing people are if there are no jobs available. In a heavily populated agricultural country such as China or India there are three kinds of unemployment, namely, (1) Ricardian unemployment, which means that because of the vast number of people in relation to land and capital there are many who cannot find jobs the product from which yields the equivalent of a living wage; (2) recurrent unemployment, which means that, given the nature of most agricultural operations, there are many dead hours in the day or days in the year when there is nothing to be done, and (3) disguised unemployment which means that two or more people share tasks which could be done by one. The test of disguised unemployment, to repeat, is that, when the extra workers are withdrawn, production does not fall. A fourth kind of unemployment, the familiar Keynesian kind which plagues the Western economy, is not so serious. This unemployment is the result of a shortage of demand, and that tends to occur only when income and savings (which may not be invested or spent) are high.

• The Chinese have tackled all their three kinds of unemployment. Recurrent and disguised unemployment are together the target of the industrial and handicraft enterprises as the commune. These use people who are seasonally idle or who cannot effectively be used or

are not needed for crop production. They pay less than urban industrial wage. But they use people who, otherwise, would be earning nothing. The opportunity cost of labour is zero. No other country has attacked this problem of recurrent and disguised unemployment—the endemic waste of manpower in the Asian countryside—with the energy and imagination of the Chinese. One senses, also, that their effort still falls well short of solving the problem.<sup>8</sup>

Chinese society is still in a flux in the throes of the massive change over from an agricultural country into a socialist industrial country. So the pattern of employment and its proportions are constantly changing. So the “shortfall in solution” which Galbraith mentions must be partly apparent than real. This will be clear from the process of tackling the so-called Ricardian unemployment. Galbraith continues:

The attack on Ricardian unemployment is by a massive public employment program. The consequence has been sufficiently celebrated in the preceding pages—the meticulous cleaning and repair of streets, an attention to parks and gardens that approaches the English standard, high standards in other public house keeping, extensive rehabilitation of public monuments, and the planting of the trees that I mentioned and that caused Barbara Tuchman to speak of the greening of China. Chinese economists now speak, perhaps a trifle disingenuously, of a labour shortage. It is, in part, the result of lavish use of manpower for such work. The latter is doing wonders for both the countryside and the cities. It will be sometime yet before a real labour shortage forces the Chinese to forego street cleaning, park maintenance, flower planting and other practices now considered archaic in the more advanced economy.<sup>9</sup>

And where did the Chinese find the money for these gigantic efforts? Did they go in for endless borrowing abroad which has made our country a miserable debtor to foreign imperialist monopolies. Galbraith confirms the findings of many other observers that Chinese Government has neither an internal or external debt. A loan from the Soviets negotiated at the time of the Korean War was paid off ahead of schedule in 1968. Ordinarily the Chinese budget operates with a slight surplus. The problem of capital initially was solved by the confiscation of foreign enterprises and large feudal estates, rather than by halting the massive flow of dividends and interests abroad. Now the capital at the disposal of the state is garnered from profits of nationalised concerns and taxation of agricultural surplus. Moreover, they have turned the vast man power surplus into tangible economic capital. The process of this “strange alchemy” which seems a sort of esoteric magic to our planners is the normal law and style of the Chinese economy.

Among the other aspects which impressed the Harvard Professor is the striking social equality and the effective social services. Herein lies the answer to the question: Who benefits from all these great achievements.

In the lands of capitalist development like ours we see vulgar luxury and ostentatious consumption to a disgusting extent by those who have benefited most from "development" at the expense of the starving unemployed millions.

Galbraith writes:

As to whom the production is for, there is quick and easy answer: it is for every one in about the same amount. Some where in the recesses of the Chinese polity there may be privileged Party and official hierarchy. Certainly it is the last ostentatious ruling class in history. So far as the visitor can see or is told, there is—for worker, technician, engineer, scientist, plant manager, local official, even one suspects, table tennis player—a truly astonishing approach to equality of income.<sup>10</sup>

If "This is the nature of the military - bureaucratic dictatorship established by Mao" as one Soviet publicist<sup>11</sup> tells us, then we have got the meaning of all these terms wrong all the way.

An insight into the complex of social services in China is provided by Galbraith's comment on medical services:

Medicine and medical services ....are major achievements. The cost of standard medicines is now about one fifth of the 1950 cost; the basic antibiotics, as I have mentioned, are available at nominal prices without prescription. I am prepared to believe that Greater Shanghai, with a population of around 12 million and its 412 hospitals, 44,000 beds and around 11,500 doctors (including the traditional practitioners), has a better medical service than New York. The average quality of practice is no doubt higher in New York. But the chance of getting no care is also much higher.<sup>12</sup>

There are many aspects which do not receive the attention of Galbraith. Certainly more cannot be expected from such a short visit and study. There are a few remarks with which we may not agree too. But still the general impression he conveys and the facts he adduces are very convincing. Galbraith concludes his observations on a "jubilant note." Paraphrasing the famous words of Lincoln Steffens who returned from revolutionary Russia, Galbraith proclaims that he saw the Chinese future "And let there be no doubt: For the Chinese it works."

We can only hope that the Soviet comrades also will one day discover the truth about China and that the Chinese too would return the compliment in due course.

M G RADHAKRISHNAN.

<sup>10</sup> Fyodor Dimitriev, *Whither China*, Moscow, p 45.

<sup>11</sup> See the famous document known as *Togliatti Memorandum*.

<sup>12</sup> V Gelbras, *Mao's Pseudo Socialism*, Moscow, p 140.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 83-100.

<sup>14</sup> See *A Critique of Mao Tse Tung's Theories and Conceptions* by F V Constantinov and others, Moscow, pp 283-85.

- <sup>6</sup> J K Galbraith, *A China Passage*, New Delhi, 1973.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p 95.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 122-23.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 123-24.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 135-36.
- <sup>11</sup> V Gelbras, *Mao's Pseudo-Socialism*, Moscow, p 66-and see all the books mentioned earlier.
- <sup>12</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp 126-27.

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